GHAZĀLĪ'S EPISTEMOLOGY

A CRITICAL STUDY OF DOUBT AND CERTAINTY

Nabil Yasien Mohamed

Ghazālī's Epistemology

Focusing on Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) – one of the foremost scholars and authorities in the Muslim world who is central to the Islamic intellectual tradition – this book embarks on a study of doubt (*shakk*) and certainty (*yaqīn*) in his epistemology.

The book looks at Ghazālī's attitude towards philosophical demonstration and Sufism as a means to certainty. In early scholarship surrounding Ghazālī, he has often been blamed as the one who single-handedly offered the death blow to philosophy in the Muslim world. In much of contemporary scholarship, Ghazālī is understood to prefer philosophy as the ultimate means to certainty, granting Sufism a secondary status. Hence, much of previous scholarship has either focused on Ghazālī as a Sufi or as a philosopher; this book takes a parallel approach, and acknowledges each discipline in its right place. It analyses Ghazālī's approach to acquiring certainty, his methodological scepticism, his foundationalism, his attitude towards authoritative instruction (*taʿlim*), and the place of philosophical demonstration and Sufism in his epistemology.

Offering a systematic and comprehensive approach to Ghazālī's epistemology, this book is a valuable resource for scholars of Islamic philosophy and Sufism in particular, and for educated readers of Islamic studies in general.

Nabil Yasien Mohamed is a fellow at the Cairo Institute for Liberal Arts and Sciences. His research interests include Ghazālian studies, classical Islamic philosophy, Sufism, contemporary Islamic thought, ecology, theology, epistemology and ethics.

Routledge Studies in Islamic Philosophy
Series Editor Oliver Leaman, *University of Kentucky*

The Routledge Studies in Islamic Philosophy Series is devoted to the publication of scholarly books in all areas of Islamic philosophy. We regard the discipline as part of the general philosophical environment and seek to include books on a wide variety of different approaches to Islamic philosophy.

The Crisis of Muslim Religious Discourse
The Necessary Shift from Plato to Kant
Lahouari Addi

Miskawayh's *Tahḏīb al-aḫlāq*
Happiness, Justice and Friendship
Ufuk Topkara

The Covenants of the Prophet Muḥammad
From Shared Historical Memory to Peaceful Co-existence
Ibrahim Mohamed Zain and Ahmed El-Wakil

Vicegerency in Islamic Thought and Scripture
Towards a Qur'anic Theory of Human Existential Function
Chauki Lazhar

From the Divine to the Human
Contemporary Islamic Thinkers on Evil, Suffering, and the Global Pandemic
Edited by Muhammad U. Faruque and Mohammed Rustom

Ghazālī's Epistemology
A Critical Study of Doubt and Certainty
Nabil Yasien Mohamed

Ghazālī's Epistemology

A Critical Study of Doubt and Certainty

Nabil Yasien Mohamed

For my mother, Zaida Mohamed, in loving memory.

Contents

Acknowledgements

A note on transliteration and translation

I have used the transliteration system of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, *Third Edition*, except for common Arabic words used in the English language. This transliteration system uses the letter "a" to indicate the *tā marbuṭa*. For the sake of simplification, I have removed the definite article from "Al-Ghazālī," and spelled it as Ghazālī. For the honorific phrase "May God's peace and blessings be upon him (*ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa sallam*)," written after the name of Prophet Muhammad, I have used: (ṣ). For the most part, I use the English translation of book titles, and Arabic terms, to make the work more accessible and readable. For the translation of Quranic verses, I have mainly used *The Study Quran*, and occasionally Abdul Haleem's translation of the Quran (referenced). All the hadith translations are from www.hadith.com, unless otherwise stated in the endnotes.

Introduction

Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), known by the honorific title "Proof of Islam" (*ḥujjat al-islām*), was one of the foremost scholars and authorities in the Muslim world. He was born in the period of Seljuk-Abbasid rule in the year 1058 CE in Tūs, Khorāsān (present day Iran). Prior to becoming a decorated scholar and holding a prestigious appointment at the Niẓāmīyya madrasa in Baghdad, Ghazālī studied under the tutelage of the prominent theologian and jurist al-Juwaynī (d. 1085), in Nīshāpūr. Ghazālī was no dogmatist or religious zealot, but a scholar with a critical spirit who relentlessly struggled in pursuit of truth and certainty. The story of doubt and certainty in Ghazālī's epistemology is replete with a myriad of contrasting views, some emphasising the rational/philosophical dimension, others emphasising the spiritual/mystical dimension, with not much consensus. Ghazālī is an enigma to many. The Andalusian Aristotelian Ibn Rushd (d. 1198) described Ghazālī as a "Sufi with the Sufis, a philosopher with the philosophers, and an Ashʿari with the Ashʿarites." In this book we will navigate Ghazālī's attitude towards philosophy and Sufism (*taṣawwuf*) through the lens of Ghazālī's understanding of doubt and certainty.

Ghazālī has often been blamed as the one who single-handedly offered the death blow to philosophy in the Muslim world. The reading of Ghazālī's *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-falāsifa*) has often perpetuated this perception. Orientalists such as Montgomery Watt have popularised the conception that after Ghazālī's departure from Baghdad in 1095 CE and "conversion," he was opposed to philosophy, and solely embraced Sufism in his subsequent works.[1] Muslim scholars such as AbdolKarim Soroush and Hassan Hanafi held similar positions to that of Watt regarding his attitude towards philosophy.

In the last three decades, there has been a shift in understanding Ghazālī's attitude towards philosophy and commitment to Ashʿarite theology and Sufism. Scholars such as Richard Frank challenged the dominant perception, and downplayed the influence of Ashʿarism on Ghazālī's thought. Frank argued that Ghazālī held an Avicennian persuasion and philosophical bent throughout his lifetime.[2] Shortly thereafter, Binyamin Abrahamov argued that to Ghazālī, the best means to know God is through intellectual endeavours and not mysticism.[3] Abrahamov assumes that Ghazālī feigns his preference for mystical experience to the commoners, but

truly prefers philosophical reason. In more recent scholarship, Alexander Treiger's work on Ghazālī's mystical cognition and Frank Griffel's work on Ghazālī's cosmology shows the unquestionable influence of Avicennian philosophy on Ghazālī's mysticism and cosmology respectively.[4] Griffel argues that in *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, Ghazālī does not aim to prove the falsehood of the teachings of the philosophers (*falāsifa*), but to show their inability to demonstrate their teachings.[5] He argues that the complexity of his "refutation" leaves room for Ghazālī to adopt many of their teachings.[6] Treiger makes the argument that *The Incoherence* is a pseudo-refutation, and Ghazālī's real views were not meant for the consumption of the commoners.[7] He further suggests that Ghazālī accepted key philosophical ideas, such as the denial of the bodily resurrection in the afterlife.[8] In Afifi al-Akiti's analysis of Ghazālī's *Major Maḍnūn,* he shows not only its close resemblance to Avicennian philosophy, but also Ghazālī's critical editing aimed at preserving Islamic orthodoxy and ameliorating the shortcomings of the *falāsifa*.[9]

Kenneth Garden contends that Ghazālī's autobiography, *The Deliverance from Error* (*al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*), is misleading as it depicts him as an outright Sufi. Garden argues that it is an apologetic work meant to vindicate him from accusations of holding philosophical and Ismāʿīlī Shiʿī ideas, which ensued during the Nīshāpūr controversy in 1106 CE.[10] He states that Ghazālī was not a Sufi recluse after his departure from Baghdad. He argues that Ghazālī actively continued to be connected to the political class and engaged in philosophical activity.[11] Jules Janssens states that Ghazālī "gives preference to the path of learning by acquisition"; however, he also argues that Ghazālī wavered between philosophy and Sufism.[12] Luis Xavier López-Farjeat presents a rationalist account of certainty in Ghazālī's epistemology. He states that for Ghazālī, "the mystical practices of the Sufis did not entirely satisfy him."[13] He further argues that Ghazālī "conceives that intellectual knowledge is the best way to know God."[14]

Recent scholarship has also continued to reveal Ghazālī's commitment to Sufism as a path to truth and certainty. Joseph Lumbard recognises the role of philosophy in Ghazālī's thought. However, he argues that Ghazālī placed a higher value on Sufism, and its concomitant witnessing (*mushāhada*) in attaining certainty than on other epistemic avenues.[15] Massimo Campanini takes a middle position; he argues that philosophy held a crucial place in Ghazālī's yearning for God. He defines philosophy as *ḥikma*, which is connected with religion, and not the peripatetic philosophy (*falsafa*) of the *falāsifa*. But he also maintains that Ghazālī recognised the superiority of the mystical path.[16] Eric Ormsby argues that in Ghazālī's thought, the highest truth is found at the nexus between knowledge and action (*ʿilm wa ʿamal*), which is signified by taste (*dhawq*) or incommunicable spiritual experience, and not authority, argumentation or philosophical demonstration.[17] Osman Bakar positions Ghazālī as a Sufi before a philosopher, and stresses the intuitive faculty as a means to "knowledge from on high."[18]

In the prior discussion, we've focused solely on the literature surrounding the notion of certainty. But doubt and certainty are two sides of the same coin, interrelated subjects, and both significant themes in Ghazālī's epistemology. The majority of scholarship surrounding Ghazālī's notion of doubt and certainty has been in comparison to Descartes.[19] In this book we aim to study doubt and certainty

within the Islamic intellectual tradition (via Ghazālī) alone and not in anticipation of René Descartes, David Hume or other Western philosophers.[20] Thus, we hope to approach the subject in a more focused manner.

There have been a few studies focusing on Ghazālī's scepticism alone, and not in comparison to other thinkers. Osman Bakar argues that Ghazālī's scepticism was methodological, and a sincere quest to attain certainty. He states that Ghazālī's "doubt was not of truth itself, but of modes of knowing and modes of accepting truth."[21] Sobhi Rayan views Ghazālī's doubt as a method of thinking to discover truth rather than a psychological state of doubt.[22] However, he does not make mention of Ghazālī's acknowledgement of a higher faculty of knowing and commitment to *taṣawwuf* as a means to higher certainty. Tanneli Kukkonen discusses the various dimensions of Ghazālī's doubt, recognising the place of philosophical certainty, but also the domain of the Sufi tradition in attaining certainty.[23] Paul Heck describes Ghazālī's brand of scepticism as "learned ignorance," which is the recognition that rationality has its limitations when attempting to attain knowledge of the reality of God.[24] He states that the submission of the intellect leads to metaphilosophical adjudication, and the use of revelation and mystical insight as a means to greater certainty.[25]

The general trend, including the studies comparing Ghazālī to Descartes, has been to read Ghazālī's doubt as either existential or methodological. The latter reading aims at critiquing the methods of knowing, establishing the foundations of knowledge and undermining heterodox doctrines. The former reading also has a place in Ghazālī's epistemology. However, Ghazālī was not a universal sceptic. He did not question all systems of knowledge or the fundamentals of the Islamic faith. He held that knowledge of the nature of reality is possible, and sought the best means of acquiring knowledge of it. Ghazālī's scepticism is akin to a critical inquiry aimed at truth and certainty. We will pursue our study of his scepticism in a dual manner, considering both, his existential and methodological scepticism, while recognising his affirmation of the possibility to acquire knowledge of the nature of reality.

In the above brief sketch, we surveyed recent scholarship surrounding Ghazālī's scepticism and certainty, with special reference to his attitude towards philosophy and Sufism. It is often assumed that acquired knowledge received through philosophical demonstration (*burhān*), and experiential knowledge achieved through spiritual unveiling (*mukāshafa*) are regarded as mutually exclusive in their attempt to achieve certainty. In the present work, we do not assume that Sufism and philosophy have an antagonistic relationship in Ghazālī's writings but propose that they are complementary. We will navigate the philosophical and Sufi dimensions of Ghazālī's epistemology through providing a comprehensive account of his notion of doubt and certainty. The essence of this research asks, what was the nature of Ghazālī's scepticism, and what approach to knowledge did he regard as yielding the greatest certainty?

Our intention in this study is to carry out a close reading and philosophical analysis of a broad variety of Ghazālī's writings to develop a systematic presentation of his theory of knowledge and the place of doubt and certainty within it. We assume that Ghazālī was consistent in his writings throughout his life; however,

we will contend that through looking at the context and audience, we may reconcile perceived inconsistencies. We do not assume that after Ghazālī's conversion he abandoned his philosophically inclined views, or that before his conversion he was not steeped in knowledge and acceptance of Sufi teachings (at the least, he theoretically accepted it). As will emerge, the later works of Ghazālī have obvious elements of philosophical thought, and during his student years in Nīshāpūr he received tutelage from the Sufi master al-Fārmadhī. Ghazālī's student Abū Bakr ibn ʿArabi (d. 1148) attested to the fact that Ghazālī practiced *taṣawwuf* at least two years before his departure from Baghdad.[26] Ghazālī had been consistent at a theoretical level, but he intensified his ethical and spiritual practice later in his life. This included his desire to write works on religious and ethical praxis. The "conversion" Ghazālī experienced was not an intellectual conversion; rather, it was an existential one, influencing his practice and academic focus, but not necessarily his position.

In addition to the introduction and conclusion, this book consists of four chapters. Chapter 1 discusses Ghazālī's scepticism and his quest for the foundations of knowledge. We begin with a historical overview of classical scepticism. Thereafter, we discuss the metaphysical dimensions to knowledge in Ghazālī's epistemology. The literature concerning Ghazālī's scepticism concerns whether it is of a psychological/existential or a methodological nature. In our study, we pursue a dual approach. We begin with the former, discussing the trajectory from doubt (*shakk*) to philosophical certainty, and the subsequent attainment of experiential certainty. Thereafter, we discuss his methodological scepticism, and its role in establishing the foundations of knowledge, and a faculty of knowing that exists beyond reason. To prevent an infinite regress in logical reasoning, Aristotle emphasised the importance of first principles. Likewise, Ghazālī sought to establish the foundations of knowledge through taking scepticism to its absolute conclusions, and couching it in a "logic" from on high. Relevant to understanding Ghazālī's foundationalism, we discuss the notions of "divine light" and "innate predisposition" (*fiṭrah*).

In Chapter 2, we discuss certainty at the nexus of reason and religious authority. We evaluate Ghazālī's polemical treatises, *The Infamies of the Esotericists* (*Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniyya*) and *The Straight Balance* (*al-Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*), which aim at undermining the anti-rationalism (scepticism) of the Ismāʿīlī Bāṭinites. We show Ghazālī's "rationalist" justification and Quranic support for the certainty (*yaqīn*) and the legitimacy of philosophical demonstration (*burhān*) in contradistinction to the authoritative instruction (*taʿlīm*) of the Bāṭinites. Thereafter, contrary to the esotericism of the Bāṭinites, we briefly show how Ghazālī's hermeneutical theory harmoniously integrates the literal, the rationalist and the esoteric meanings of the source texts. Ghazālī is often read as an absolutely anti-authoritarian figure. However, we also discuss his appropriation of authoritative instruction (*taʿlīm*) within the framework of Sunni orthodoxy.

Ghazālī straddled two polemical battles, one with the Bāṭinites, undermining their anti-rationalism, and the other with the philosophers (*falāsifa*), curbing their overconfidence in rationalism. In Chapter 3, we turn to Ghazālī's famous work

The Incoherence of the Philosophers (*Tahāfut al-falāsifa*), with a special focus on the seventeenth chapter, dealing with causality, miracles and the omnipotence of God. We discuss Ghazālī's sceptical assault on the philosophers' (*falāsifa*) concept of causality. We examine his argument for the rational possibility of the occurrence of miracles, and the vindication of revelation as a source of certainty on matters outside the domain of reason. We show that Ghazālī was not averse to philosophy, but sought to cast doubt on particular unorthodox ideas of the *falāsifa*, and was concerned about the limitations and misapplication of philosophical logic. Finally, we demonstrate that Ghazālī's chief aim was to humble the philosophers, and give epistemic room for the place of revelation (*waḥy*) and divine inspiration (*ilhām*).

Chapter 4 ventures to discuss certainty within the Sufi tradition. Recent scholarship has often ignored or undermined the importance Ghazālī placed on spiritual experience (*dhawq*) or unveiling (*mukāshafa*) as the highest level of certainty. This chapter will show the complementary relationship between philosophical and spiritual knowledge, but highlight the superior station of the latter in Ghazālī's epistemology. We begin the chapter discussing Ghazālī's spiritual crisis, and quest to taste a portion of prophecy, or otherwise put, the spiritual experiences of the Sufis. Thereafter, we discuss the philosophical and Sufi path to knowledge of God, followed by an analysis of the "inability to truly know Him," and yet at the same time "to know only Him," as a station of certainty.

Next, we discuss Ghazālī's main intellectual focus, promoting the "science of the path to the hereafter" (*ʿilm ṭarīq al-ākhira*), and its two components, the "knowledge of praxis" (*ʿilm al-muʿāmala*) and the "knowledge of unveiling" (*ʿilm al-mukāshafa*). We show that the knowledge of praxis is mainly the Sufi path, but includes elements of Greek moral philosophy. Thereafter, we examine that the knowledge of unveiling is the product of religious and moral praxis (*al-muʿāmala*), and represents the esoteric knowledge of the Sufis, not philosophical knowledge, as some scholars have argued. We show that *ʿilm al-mukāshafa* provides both certain knowledge and knowledge not accessible to the mind, and also secures felicity in this world and the hereafter. Thereafter, we discuss the apex of certainty in Ghazālī's epistemology, the monistic vision of God, and the concomitant qualities in a person who has attained this station. Finally, we examine the parallels between Ghazālī's theory of certainty and the Quranic triad of certainty.

Notes

1 See Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of Al-Ghazālī.*
2 Frank, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ashʿarite School*; Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System: Al-Ghazâlî & Avicenna*. Frank's writings did not go unopposed, it was challenged by scholars such as Michael Marmura and Ahmad Dallal. See Dallal, "Ghazali and the Perils of Interpretation"; Marmura, "Ghazālian Causes and Intermediaries."
3 Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazālī's Supreme Way to Know God."
4 Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and its Avicennian Foundation*. Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology.*
5 Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 98.

6 Ibid.

7 Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and its Avicennian Foundation*, 96.

8 Ibid., 92–93.

9 Al-Akiti, "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of *Falsafa*: Al-Ghazālī's *Maḍnun*, *Tahāfut*, and *Maqāṣid*, with Particular attention to their *Falsafī* Treatments of God's Knowledge of Temporal Events," 80.

10 See also van Ess, who initially made the observation that the autobiography is an apologetic work. van Ess, "Quelques remarques sur le Munqidh Min Aḍ-Ḍalâl"

11 Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and His Revival of the Religious Sciences*.

12 Janssens, "Al-Ghazālī between Philosophy (*Falsafa*) and Sufism (*Taṣawwuf*): His Complex Attitude in the Marvels of the Heart (*ʿAjāʾib al-qalb*) of the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*," 626 and 632.

13 López-Farjeat, "Al-Ghazālī on Knowledge (*ʿilm*) and Certainty (*yaqīn*) in *al-Munqidh min aḍ–dalal* and in *al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*," 241–242.

14 Ibid., 230.

15 Lumbard, "Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī and the Art of Knowing."

16 Campanini, *Al-Ghazali and the Divine*, 5 and 9.

17 Ormsby, "The Taste of Truth: The Structure of Experience in Ghazālī's *Munqidh*."

18 Bakar, "The Place of Doubt in Islamic Epistemology: Al-Ghazzali's Philosophical Experience."

19 See Sharif, "Philosophical Influence from Descartes to Kant"; Sami, "The Place and Function of Doubt in the Philosophies of Descartes and al-Ghazālī"; Götz, "The Quest for Certainty: Al-Ghazālī and Descartes"; Albertini, "Crisis and Certainty of Knowledge in al-Ghazālī (1058–1111) and Descartes (1596–1650)"; Moad, "Comparing Phases of Skepticism in Al-Ghazālī and Descartes: Some First Meditations on Deliverance from Error"; Zamir, "Descartes and Al-Ghazālī: Doubt, Certitude and Light."

20 Halevi shows the functional scepticism of Ghazālī in the *Incoherence*. He briefly compares Ghazālī's and Hume's critique of causality. However, Halevi prefers to compare Ghazālī to Wittgenstein, stating that their scepticism is a "different game." He states that it is a tool applied for polemical reasons and not to flex one's scepticism for its own sake. Halevi states that despite the historical gap, there are structural similarities between Ghazālī and Wittgenstein, for instance, the polemic Wittgenstein waged against natural science, and Ghazālī against Peripatetic philosophy. Halevi, "The Theologian's Doubts: Natural Philosophy and the Skeptical Games of Ghazālī." See also Akdogan, "Ghazālī, Descartes, and Hume."

21 Bakar, "The Place of Doubt in Islamic Epistemology: Al-Ghazzali's Philosophical Experience."

22 Rayan, "Al-Ghazali's Method of Doubt."

23 Kukkonen, "Al-Ghazālī's Skepticism Revisited."

24 Heck, "Chapter 14: Skepticism in Classical Islam: The Case of Ghazali," 203; Heck, *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion*.

25 Heck, "Chapter 14: Skepticism in Classical Islam: The Case of Ghazali," 203.

26 Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 9.

Bibliography

Abrahamov, Binyamin. "Al-Ghazālī's Supreme Way to Know God." *Studia Islamica* 77 (1993): 141–168.

Akdogan, Cemil. "Ghazālī, Descartes, and Hume: The Genealogy of Some Philosophical Ideas." *Islamic Studies* 42, no. 3 (2003): 487–502.

Al-Akiti, M. Afifi. "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of *Falsafa*: Al-Ghazālī's *Maḍnun*, *Tahāfut*, and *Maqāṣid*, with Particular Attention to their *Falsafī* Treatments of God's Knowledge of Temporal Events." In *Avicenna and His Legacy: A Golden Age of Science and Philosophy*, edited by Y. Tzvi Langermann, 51–100. Turnhout: Brepols, 2009.

Albertini, Tamara. "Crisis and Certainty of Knowledge in al-Ghazālī (1058–1111) and Descartes (1596–1650)." *Philosophy East and West* 55, no. 1 (2005): 1–14.

Bakar, Osman. "The Place of Doubt in Islamic Epistemology: Al-Ghazzali's Philosophical Experience." In *The History and Philosophy of Islamic Science*, 39–60. Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1999.

Campanini, Massimo. *Al-Ghazali and the Divine*. New York: Routledge, 2019.

Dallal, Ahmad. "Ghazali and the Perils of Interpretation." Edited by Richard M. Frank. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122, no. 4 (2002): 773–787.

Ess, Josef van. "Quelques remarques sur le Munqidh Min Aḍ-Ḍalâl." In *Ghazâlî: La Raison et Le Miracle*, edited by Abdel-Magid Turki, 57–68. Paris: Éditions Maisonneuve et Larose, 1987.

Frank, Richard M. *Al-Ghazālī and the Ashʿarite School*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994.

Frank, Richard M. *Creation and the Cosmic System: Al-Ghazâlî & Avicenna*. Heildelberg: Carl Winter, 1992.

Garden, Kenneth. *The First Islamic Reviver: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and His Revival of the Religious Sciences*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Götz, Ignacio L. "The Quest for Certainty: Al-Ghazālī and Descartes." *Journal of Philosophical Research* 28 (2003): 1–22.

Griffel, Frank. *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Halevi, Leor. "The Theologian's Doubts: Natural Philosophy and the Skeptical Games of Ghazālī." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63, no. 1 (2002): 19–39.

Heck, Paul L. *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion*. London and New York: Routledge, 2014.

Heck, Paul L. "Chapter 14: Skepticism in Classical Islam: The Case of Ghazali." In *Skepticism: From Antiquity to the Present*, edited by Diego E. Machuca and Baron Reed, 196–208. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.

Janssens, Jules. "Al-Ghazālī between Philosophy (*Falsafa*) and Sufism (*Taṣawwuf*): His Complex Attitude in the Marvels of the Heart (*ʿAjāʾib al-qalb*) of the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*." Edited by M. Afifi al-Akiti. *The Muslim World* 101, no. 4 (2011): 614–632.

Kukkonen, Taneli. "Al-Ghazālī's Skepticism Revisited." In *Rethinking the History of Skepticism*, edited by Henrik Lagurlund, 29–59. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010.

López-Farjeat, Luis Xavier. "Al-Ghazālī on Knowledge (*ʿilm*) and Certainty (*yaqīn*) in *al-Munqidh min aḍ-dalal* and in *al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*." In *Islam and Rationality: The Impact of al-Ghazālī*, edited by Georges Tamer, 229–252. Leiden: Brill, 2015.

Lumbard, Joseph. "Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī and the Art of Knowing." In *Light upon Light: Essays in Islamic Thought and History in Honor of Gerhard Bowering*, edited by Jamal J. Elias and Bilal Orfali, 401–419. Leiden: Brill, 2019.

Marmura, Michael E. "Ghazālian Causes and Intermediaries." Edited by Richard M. Frank. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115, no. 1 (1995): 89–100.

Moad, Omar Edward. "Comparing Phases of Skepticism in Al-Ghazālī and Descartes: Some First Meditations on Deliverance from Error." *Philosophy East and West* 59, no. 1 (2009): 88–101.

Ormsby, Eric. "The Taste of Truth: The Structure of Experience in Ghazālī's *Munqidh*." In *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*, edited by Wael Hallaq and Donald Little, 133–152. Leiden: Brill, 1991.

Rayan, Sobhi. "Al-Ghazali's Method of Doubt." *Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA)* 38, no. 2 (2004): 162–173.

Sami, Najm. "The Place and Function of Doubt in the Philosophies of Descartes and al-Ghazālī." *Philosophy East and West* 1, no. 3/4 (1996): 133–141.

Sharif, Mian Mohammad. "Philosophical Influence from Descartes to Kant." In *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, edited by Mian Mohammad Sharif, Vol. 2: 1381–1387. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1966.

Treiger, Alexander. *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and its Avicennian Foundation*. London and New York: Routledge, 2012.

Watt, W. Montgomery. *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of Al-Ghazālī*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963.

Zamir, Syed Rizwan. "Descartes and Al-Ghazālī: Doubt, Certitude and Light." *Islamic Studies* 49, no. 2 (2010): 219–251.

1 Ghazālī's scepticism and quest for the foundations of knowledge

For a paradigmatic figure like Ghazālī, the foundationalism present in his popular and well-studied text *The Deliverance from Error* (*al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*) has hardly been the subject of investigation. In this chapter, we show Ghazālī's engagement with a methodological scepticism aimed at establishing the foundational truths. To prevent an infinite regress in logical reasoning, Ghazālī sought to establish the foundations of knowledge through taking his own brand of scepticism to its absolute conclusions. His sceptical engagement with the epistemological sources, such as *taqlīd* (uncritical imitation), sense perception and necessary truths, is important in order to evaluate his epistemology and approach to acquiring certainty (*yaqīn*). To understand his foundationalism and vindication from a sceptical frame of mind, the concepts of "Divine Light" and *fiṭra* (primordial predisposition) will be discussed.

We further show in this chapter that in contradistinction to classical scepticism, Ghazālī's scepticism was not a denial or a suspension of the assertions of reality. Neither was it a denial of Muslim doctrine, but a methodological attempt to establish the foundations of knowledge. We do not consider his scepticism to be akin to atheism, or a denial of all systems of knowledge, nor to that of a secularist who wishes to free himself of religious authority, but we conceive it to be a process of critical human inquiry. It is not scepticism for its own sake. However, doubt is essential to human consciousness itself, not just a feigned operation. Ghazālī is normally either viewed as experiencing a psychological/existential scepticism or engaging in a methodological scepticism. In this chapter we pursue a dual approach: we primarily focus on his methodological scepticism as a means of attaining truth and certainty, but also recognise and discuss the place of psychological scepticism.

Background to classical scepticism (*safsaṭa*)

Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī did not operate in a philosophical vacuum. He was aware of Greek scepticism and its Arab usage, namely, *safsaṭa*.[1] The literal translation of *safsaṭa* is "sophistry"; however, in its usage in the Islamic tradition, it is more broadly a reference to the philosophical scepticism of the ancient Greeks. Ghazālī

acknowledges falling into *safsaṭa*. In *The Deliverance from Error* (*al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*), he says, "this malady was mysterious and it lasted for nearly two months. During that time I was a sceptic in fact, but not in utterance and doctrine."[2] The translators of *The Deliverance*, Richard McCarthy, Montgomery Watt, and Muhammad Abūlaylah understand and translate the term *safsaṭa* as scepticism.[3] The striking parallels between Ghazālī's brand of scepticism and that of Descartes have led to numerous studies. But few have compared Ghazālī's scepticism to Greek scepticism (*safsaṭa*) because of the disparity between them. However, Ghazālī recognises his "malady" as a symptom of a bout of Greek scepticism (*safsaṭa*), albeit that his scepticism was of a different nature altogether. Prior to understanding the nature of Ghazālī's doubt, it is imperative to understand the nature and scope of scepticism in the Hellenic tradition and the Islamic tradition's reception of *safsaṭa*.

Prior to the dominant schools of scepticism, namely, Academic and Pyrrhonian scepticism, the germination of a sceptical tradition in Greece began with Socrates (d. 399 BCE). The Socratic method of inquiry embodied a spirit of investigation, not a dogmatic attachment to belief. This dialectical approach called into question one's opinions. In Plato's *Apology*, it is stated that the Delphic Oracle proclaimed that no one is wiser than Socrates. In a sceptical fashion, Socrates sought counterexamples of wiser individuals in Athens, and failing to find anyone, he concluded:

> It is likely that neither of us know anything *worthwhile*, but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know; so I am likely to be wiser than he to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know.[4]

This is not necessarily an assertion that "he knows nothing" like typical sceptics proclaim, but it is an advocacy for the critical examination of worthwhile matters.[5] It is no wonder Socrates was accused of being a Sophist, and consequently given the hemlock. The Sophists were progenitors to scepticism in their method of dialectical engagement; they persuasively argued for both sides of an argument, laying bare the inconsistencies of their interlocutor. Thus, they held no position regarding the truth or the falsity of an issue, or the nature of how things are.

The Academic Sceptics were members of Plato's Academy. The turn in scepticism of the Academy began with the later leader (scholarch) of Plato's Academy, Arcesilaus (d. 240 BCE), and following him, Carneades (d. 129 BCE). The Academic Sceptics were opposed to Stoicism. Zeno, the founder of Stoicism and a contemporary of Arcesilaus, held that knowledge is achievable and within the capacity of human beings. The Academic Sceptics took a contrasting view, asserting that knowledge is not possible and that there is no criterion for truth, eventually leading to a suspension of judgement.[6] Arguments were not induced to establish a conclusion but to arrive at a suspension of judgement. According to Diogenes, Arcesilaus "was the first to suspend judgement owing to the contradictions of opposing ideas."[7] Thus, Academic Sceptics made no assertions of belief or disbelief of any proposition, but merely suspended judgement.

Academic Sceptics are still regarded as dogmatic because they *assert* that knowledge is not possible, whereas the Pyrrhonian Sceptics avoid making assertions that knowledge is not possible. This is an important difference between the two schools. Hazlett regards Academic Scepticism as something professional or scholastic, whereas Pyrrhonian Scepticism is understood to be a way of life aimed at inducing "a state of tranquillity."[8] Through mainly the writings of Sextus Empericus (d. 210 BCE), we learn about the proponents of Pyrrhonian Scepticism, from its founder Pyrrho (d. 275 BCE) to its later advocates Aenesidemus (d. 10 BCE), Agrippa (d. 12 BCE), and Empiricus himself.

Pyrrho of Elis emphasised three questions outlining his philosophy and prescription to attain happiness. The first question asks, "what are things like by nature?", and he answers stating that things are indeterminate or undecidable. The second question asks, "in what way ought we be disposed to them?", and he claims that we cannot make a claim of truth or falsehood. The third question asks, "what will be the result for those who are so disposed?", and he responds by stating that what follows is speechlessness and tranquillity (*ataraxia*).[9] Due to Pyrrho's distrust of his senses or lack of affirmation to any belief, caricatures have been attributed to him. It is said that he was unmoved by the sight of a drowning man, and he merely walked past him without concern, or that friends had to protect him from a collision with a moving wagon or from falling over a cliff.[10] However, there have also been reports to the contrary, stating that he was sensible, not to mention that his philosophy adheres to *appearances*.[11]

In Aenesidemus's *Pyrrohnian Discourses*, he gives an account of ten modes of advancing a sceptical argument. It is an approach to putting appearances and thoughts into opposition. The ten modes create disagreements of equal weight, which then brings about a suspension of judgement, and finally induces a state of tranquillity. The ten modes are meant to establish arguments based on the difference in human beings, sense perception, states, positions, intervals and places, custom or belief, relativity, and so on. For instance, doubt may be induced regarding whether from a distance, a boat is stationary or moving; or whether honey is bitter or sweet using one of these modes.[12]

At the heart of Pyrrhonian Scepticism's epistemic arsenal are Agrippa's five modes. Agrippa develops five modes used to bring about doubt to a dogmatist's position, namely, the modes from dispute, infinite regress, relativity (which captures many of the ten modes), hypothesis (assumption), and circularity. Collectively, the modes from infinite regress, assumption and circularity are commonly known as Agrippa's trilemma, or what Fogelin regards as the "Challenging Modes."[13] Agrippa's trillemma essentially challenges the grounds of professed knowledge:

1) The mode from infinite regress throws into disrepute arguments with a possibly infinite number of premises. Since there is no initial premise, a suspension of judgement follows.
2) The mode from hypothesis invokes a suspension of judgement if a premise is made on the basis of an assumption without an argument, for these assumptions may be false.[14]

3) The mode from circularity is applied "when that which ought to confirm a given investigated matter requires confirmation from that matter."[15] The sceptic's application of it throws the argument into disrepute and induces a suspension of judgement.

These modes are meant to undermine any argument or notion that knowledge is possible. Scholars such as Fogelin imply that the Agrippan argument cannot be defeated.[16] Williams states that the Challenging Modes are meant to investigate the grounds of those who claim to hold "knowledge of how things really are."[17] The Challenging Modes imply an assumption that every proposition is subject to proof; they ignore the reality that knowledge is established on foundations, first principles or a priori axioms not subject to justification.

   Agrippa's trilemma implies that there is no standard or criterion for truth: "knowledge always requires prior knowledge – which suggests that knowledge is impossible."[18] For example, you may believe that a bird is sitting on a perch, and you justify this through presupposing sense perception to be a criterion of truth.[19] However, sense perception itself, as a criterion of truth, can be called into question using the trilemma, concluding that no criterion of truth exists and knowledge is not possible. In our later discussion of Ghazālī's methodological scepticism, he does not resort to reason to save himself from this type of quandary but the reality of foundational knowledge acquired through God's grace.[20] In a similar manner, Aristotle held that there are basic beliefs which require no justification, lest one finds a demonstration continues ad infinitum. This foundational knowledge acts as a plinth for acquired knowledge, consequently dislocating Agrippa's trilemma or sceptical assault.

   Standing on the shoulders of these scholars, Sextus Empiricus in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* refines Pyrrhonism and responds to its interlocutors. Although Empiricus stresses that scepticism is a philosophy of investigation for the discovery of "truth," and the inducing of a suspension of judgement and subsequent tranquillity, it is not a sincere aim at the truth, considering that no assent takes place.[21] The very notion of investigation implies predisposed or implicit knowledge: "the sceptic's ability to understand involves some knowledge, namely a kind of knowledge that does not entail any belief."[22] In the sceptic's dialectical confrontation with the dogmatist, it is inconceivable that they do not adhere to logical laws, concepts or rules of inference, which a foundationalist would argue are innate or implicit.

   The famous contention regarding Pyrrhonism is the charge that sceptics cannot act without belief. In other words, that it is impractical. Aristotle asks, "what difference will there be between him and plants?"[23] Socrates remarks that,

> We will be better men, braver and less idle, if we believe that one must search for the things that one does not know, rather than if we believe that it is not possible to find out what we do not know and that we must not look for it.[24]

Empiricus argues that sceptics follow appearances as a standard of action which does not necessarily involve belief. He also argues that a sceptic is compelled to

action (i.e. drinking out of thirst); that he habitually follows custom; or that he does what he has been professionally trained to do.[25] Despite the logical gymnastics applied by Empiricus, action does seem to imply a degree of belief – perhaps what scholars call an urbane scepticism, which is not a suspension on all matters (rustic scepticism), but solely on scientific and philosophical matters, while still holding ordinary beliefs.[26]

Evaluating the scope of scepticism, we note that it is not a monolith. A sceptic might be focused on particular disciplines alone, be it ethical, scientific, theological propositions, and so on. Or the target of the scepticism may be the sources of knowledge, such as sense perception, testimony (authority), revelation, or rational inquiry.[27]

The nature and scope of Academic and Pyrrhonian scepticism *loosely* fall under the category of *safsaṭa.* Ghazālī was unique among Muslim theologians in his appropriation of scepticism to establish the foundations of knowledge, or his application of it to bring about suspicion of heterodox positions (I will return to this in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3). Many other theologians within the Islamic traditions have defined and responded to scepticism (*safsaṭa*). The founder of the Māturīdī school of theology, Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 944), in his main work, *The Book of Monotheism (Kitāb al-Ṭawḥīd)*, states that the sophists are described as those who deny the real essences *(ḥaqāīq)* of things and claim that knowledge does not exist.[28] Ghazālī's teacher, the Ashʿari theologian Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 1085), states that there are four groups of Sophists: those who deny necessary knowledge; those who say that knowledge cannot be proven; those that do not deny knowledge but the human ability to know; and those relativists who say that firmly held beliefs all constitute knowledge, and thus there is no objective knowledge, only subjective knowledge (i.e. the universe is eternal or temporal, and the Euphrates River is sweet or bitter; all constitute knowledge).[29]

Another Māturīdī theologian, Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafi (d. 1142), in his widely commented-upon work, *The Creed of al-Nasafi* (*Al-ʿAqāid al-Nasafiyya*), states at the beginning of the text that the people of truth hold that the essences of things are real and knowledge of it is demonstrable, in contradistinction to the Sophists.[30] The Ashʿari theologian Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 1390) comments on al-Nasafi's text, stating that the Sophists are of three kinds: the obstinate, who deny the real essences of things, positing that they are illusions; the opinioners, who deny the reality of things and claim that essences follow what one wishes to believe; and the agnostics, who deny that knowledge can be established or not.[31] Al-Taftāzānī provides a rebuttal to these positions but concludes that in reality, you cannot have an argument with them because they do not assent to anything, and thus nothing can be established.[32] He states that the only way to deal with them is to punish them with fire. They will either affirm the reality that fire burns or they will be consumed by it.[33]

It is apparent from the remarks of al–Māturīdī, al–Juwaynī, al-Nasafi, and al-Taftāzānī that the term *safsaṭa* is in reference to scepticism but not wholly of a Greek persuasion.[34] It was not just in the Islamic tradition that the sceptics were referred to as "sophists," but among Hellenic philosophers as well.[35] However, in

the Islamic tradition, there was no systematic philosophy of scepticism like that of Greek scepticism. The engagements with scepticism were of a methodological nature aimed at establishing certainty, or bringing about suspicion of unorthodox beliefs.[36]

The metaphysical dimensions of knowledge

In contradistinction to the Greek sceptics, Ghazālī held that knowledge is possible. We can apprehend the reality of things. Ghazālī's scepticism was not a denial or a suspension of judgements about reality, but a methodological attempt to establish the foundations of knowledge. In *The Book of Knowledge (Kitāb al-ʿilm)*, Ghazālī states that certainty or true knowledge is "seeing things as they *really* are,"[37] which is the reality (*haqīqa*), the essence (*dhāt*), quiddity (*māhiya*), or spirit (*rūḥ*) of a thing as opposed to the appearance or contingent properties of the thing. In *The Deliverance from Error,* he states that he had a yearning from a tender age already to seek the "real meaning of things."[38] Besides the fact that he recognised knowledge as possible, it is unquestionable that he placed a high value on its acquisition. The very opening of his magnum opus, the *Revival of the Religious Sciences (Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn)*, begins with *The Book of Knowledge* and a discussion of the virtues of knowledge. Ghazālī's brand of scepticism was unique in that it was not aimed at the suspension of judgement but the attainment of true knowledge.

Ghazālī regards the seat of knowledge as the heart.[39] He uses the term "heart" (*qalb*) most often; however, relative to the context of usage, it can also be called spirit (*ruḥ*), soul (*nafs*), or intellect (*ʿaql*).[40] The heart in this context is understood as a subtle substance that is of a spiritual sort, not the physical organ.[41] He explains that the usage of the term "heart" in the Quran and Sunna is that which "discerns and comes to know the real nature of things."[42] Thus, the "heart" (*qalb*) can be termed the "intellect" (*al-ʿālim*) in the context of it discerning the real nature of things. To understand the metaphysics of the acquisition of knowledge, Ghazālī uses the metaphor of a mirror. He states that the heart is like a mirror to the image of the specific nature of things.[43] The specific nature of things is regarded as the intelligibles (*al-maʿlumāt*).[44] The image of the intelligibles which are reflected in the mirror is termed intelligence (*al-ʿilm*). Thus, the "mirror" of the heart is the receptacle which receives representations or images of the nature of things, in the same way that an individual is not in the mirror itself, but an image of the individual reflected in the mirror. Ghazālī understands intelligence as the grasping of reality or that which exists in the heart through its representation.

However, the mirror of the heart may be prevented from receiving knowledge for one of five reasons: the heart of a youth is imperfect or underdeveloped and cannot reflect intelligibles; there is dullness and filth on the surface of the heart because of acts of disobedience; the mirror of the heart may not be faced in the direction necessary to receive the knowledge of reality; the veil of uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*) may be a deterrent to receiving true knowledge of the realities; or there is ignorance of the direction in which to obtain the knowledge of the

realities.[45] Ghazālī states that if it were not for these reasons (the veils), the heart would readily be a recipient of the real nature of things. The heart itself is innately endowed with the ability to know; it is a divine trust (*ʾamāna*) bestowed upon humankind.[46] It is what makes humanity unique, and distinct from animals or other material entities. Ghazālī regards this trust as experiential knowledge of God (*maʿrifa*) and as the declaration of his Oneness (*tawḥid*), the highest level of knowledge.[47]

All that exists in the material world came into manifestation from an archetype written on the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*). The veil that prevents the heart from knowing the true realities of things hangs between the Preserved Tablet and the heart. The knowledge of the real nature of things is inscribed on the Preserved Tablet.[48] The Preserved Tablet exists in the immaterial world on a level of existence that is prior to corporeal existence.[49] The Preserved Tablet has on it recorded all that God has decreed until the day of judgement. It contains all things and events that exist in the material and immaterial world. Ghazālī states that the true knowledge of things is reflected from the Tablet onto the "mirror" of the heart.

Aside from axiomatic knowledge, knowledge of things comes into the heart either through the door of general inspiration (*ilhām*), or through the door of acquired knowledge. In the case of general inspiration, through God's grace alone, the veil is lifted, and gleams of reality written on the Preserved Tablet are directly reflected upon the heart.[50] In the case of acquired knowledge, from the phenomenal world (which comes into existence from the Preserved Tablet), the external senses transmit an image to the retentive imagination (*khayāl*), and subsequently it is transmitted as a representation in the heart.[51] In the former case, the veils are lifted and knowledge gushes forth into the heart without the senses as a means. These two doors to the attainment of knowledge are the ways of the Sufis and the learned (*ḥukamāʾ*). The Sufis aim to purify and polish the heart and *directly* gain knowledge into the heart, whereas the learned (i.e. the philosophers) aim to gain knowledge into the heart *indirectly* through the acquisition of knowledge from reality itself.

According to Ghazālī, there are two types of knowledge, intellectual knowledge and religious knowledge. Intellectual knowledge is divided into that which is axiomatic or foundational (*ḍarūriyya*), and that which is acquired (*muktasaba*). The latter deals with this world and the hereafter. The sciences of this world are subjects such as medicine, engineering, and astronomy; whereas, the knowledge of the hereafter has to do with the states of the heart: knowledge of God, his attributes and His actions.[52] Religious knowledge, on the other hand, is received on the basis of authority (*taqlīd*) via the prophets. It is through the study of the Quran and the Sunna that it is acquired. Although the heart requires the intellectual sciences, it is through the religious sciences that the heart is protected from spiritual diseases. Ghazālī thus regards the former as food and the latter as medicine. Thus, he states that, "the intellect cannot dispense with instruction, nor can instruction dispense with the intellect."[53]

Ghazālī establishes an epistemic criterion of the true meaning of reality in *The Deliverance*:

So I began by saying to myself: "What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is." Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false – for example, a man who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake – his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: "No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake" – and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his feat. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew! I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.[54]

In this passage, Ghazālī emphatically remarks that certainty (*yaqīn*) or indubitable knowledge is of such a nature that no doubt (*shakk*) clings to the knowledge, and nor is the mind susceptible to error or trickery. Ghazālī uses the weight of axiomatic knowledge or necessary truths, for example, that ten is more than three, as an indication of what he deems to be indubitable. Thus, for knowledge received through acquisition or testimony to be of certainty and utmost clarity, it should meet the weight of axiomatic knowledge. This level of certainty which Ghazālī speaks of is an absence of doubt.[55] Prior to Ghazālī, al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013) regarded certain knowledge as that which has no doubt attached to it, and connected it to axiomatic knowledge as well.[56] Equipped with a criterion of certainty, Ghazālī began his sceptical journey of scrutinising his knowledge, sifting between error and truth.

Ghazālī's hierarchy (*marātib*) of certainty

It is important to distinguish between Ghazālī's methodological doubt, discussed in the following section, and the presence of an existential or psychological doubt. In Ghazālī's intellectual journey, it is apparent that he aimed to remove doubt and attain the highest degree of certainty. He describes those who seek to strengthen their certitude as "scholars of the hereafter."[57] To him, certitude is not just intellectual but also experiential. In his exposition on certitude in *The Book of Knowledge*, he opens his discussion referencing numerous statements from the Islamic tradition: that the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) said that "certitude is faith in its entirety"[58] and encouraged his followers to "learn the knowledge of certitude."[59] He also relates Luqmān's advice to his son: "O my dear son, knowledge without certitude

is not possible, a person only acts in accordance with his certitude; one who acts diminishes not in his efforts until his certitude diminishes."[60]

Ghazālī explicitly states that there are two meanings or grades to the term "certitude." The first meaning is employed by proponents of theoretical knowledge (theologians and philosophers), and the second meaning is employed by the practitioners of religious knowledge (jurists and Sufis). The former group uses the term "certainty" to express the *absence of doubt*. This level of certainty, the absence of doubt, is succeeded by prior stations of progress:[61]

The first station is the case of a particular matter holding equal weight between truth and falsehood. The soul does not incline towards a judgement on the matter. This station is referred to as doubt (*shakk*). The second station is the proclivity towards one of two positions; however, the possibility of the veracity of the other opinion remains. This station is referred to as supposition or opinion (*ẓann*). The third station is the inclination of the self towards the truth of a thing. The mind is convinced of it, no other opinion arises, and in the case that it does, it refuses to accept it. However, this station is not based on indubitable knowledge; there is no proof. If a person is exposed to discursive arguments of an opposing viewpoint, he may assent to the possibility thereof. This is the conviction of the common people attained through partisanship. This station is referred to as conviction (*ʿitiqād*). The fourth station, the final station, is the acquisition of indubitable knowledge attained through demonstrative proof (*burhān*). There is no doubt in it, nor is doubt possible. This station is referred to as certainty (*yaqīn*). Ghazālī further states that certain knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-yaqīn*) of which no doubt exists, may be attained through philosophical speculation (*naẓar*), sense perception, first principles,[62] unanimous narration (*tawātur*),[63] or empirical observation.[64] This type of certainty is an objective certainty aimed at the negation of doubt and acquired through logical demonstration. He states that this level of certainty cannot be associated with weakness or strength; a proposition is either affirmative or not. Thus, there are no degrees in the *absence of doubt*.

The second group (Sufis and jurists) possesses the certainty of an experiential and subjective type. It signifies the degree to which it overwhelms the heart. This certitude involves no doubt but rather the extent to which a matter engulfs the heart. Thus, this certitude has the attribute of strength. For example, the fact of death is a matter of no doubt; however, a person may be considered either weak or strong in his certitude of death depending on his attitude towards it or preparation for it. Thus, this type of certitude inclines the self to affirm a matter and overwhelm the heart to the extent that it manifests itself in sound judgement and proper conduct.[65]

Ghazālī combines the two types of certitude, defining them as: "on the one hand, the negation of all doubt; on the other hand, the governance of certainty over the soul that it is the dominant factor for judgment and action."[66] Reading Ghazālī in a linear fashion does an injustice to understanding the clear hierarchy of certainty present in his epistemology. The first level or meaning of certainty is of a rational nature, concerned with the removal of doubt. The second level is experiential; it encompasses the heart and manifests itself in sound action. Ghazālī shows a

holistic understanding of certainty; it is a clear blend between the rational and the mystical dimensions. Otherwise put, it is a synthesis between the theoretical and the practical/experiential components of certainty. The two types of certainty are of different kinds, the one objective and the other subjective; however, in this grading he clearly regards the subjective or mystical certitude as superior.[67] To convey this point, in *The Deliverance*, he states that the knowledge of the definitions and causes of health and drunkenness is clearly different to the actual state of experiencing what it is to be healthy or of being in a state of drunkenness. Bakar states:

> For al-Ghazālī, both kinds of *yaqīn* need to be strengthened, but it is the second kind of *yaqīn* which is the nobler of the two, since without it serving as an epistemological basis for the first kind of *yaqīn*, the latter would definitely lack epistemic substance and value. Moreover, it fosters religious and spiritual obedience, and praiseworthy habits. In other words, philosophical certainty is of no value if it is not accompanied by submission to the truth and by the transformation of one's being in conformity with that truth.[68]

The gradation of certainty is a common discussion in Ghazālī's writings. In *The Marvels of the Heart* (*Kitāb sharḥ ʿajāʾib al-qalb*), he presents three degrees of faith or illumination. The first degree is that of the commoners, who attain their faith through uncritical imitation *(taqlīd)* of authority or custom. The second degree is that of the theologians, who acquire their faith through logical proofs. And the third degree, the highest, it is that of the Sufis, who attain their faith "with the light of certainty."[69] He states that it is real experiential knowledge based on direct observation (*mushāhada*). In *The Niche of Lights* (*Mishkāt al-anwār*), a text of mystical philosophy, he opens the work discussing the meaning of the term "light" or illumination with respect to the commoners, the elect, and the elect of the elect.[70] This is followed by a discussion of those sects and groups veiled with darkness, darkness and light, and pure light with respect to their approximation to God (*Al-Haqq*). The highest level of unveiling (*mukāshafa*) and illumination is that of the elect of the elect, the mystic's witness of divine unity (*tawḥīd*), and the annihilation (*fanā)* of other existents.[71]

It is apparent in this discussion that doubt is of a psychological or existential kind, too, not just methodological, as shown in the subsequent discussion. According to the stages of certainty, doubt is a particular stage in the journey towards certainty. Doubt is a "constitutive moment in human consciousness" prior to establishing certainty.[72] In theoretical matters, Ghazālī meticulously outlines the stages from doubt towards the absence of doubt, that is, certainty, as well as the epistemic tools used to achieve it. In Ghazālī's chief work of theology, *Moderation in Belief (al-Iqtiṣād fī al-iʿtiqād*), he advises the use of demonstrative arguments to rejuvenate the faith of individuals plagued with doubts and move them to certainty. In matters of faith, he says that "the dispelling of doubts about the fundamentals of beliefs is obligatory."[73] Ghazālī does not entertain religious scepticism; however, he recognises that doubt is a reality of many believers, and thus advocates the application of dialectical theology *(kalām)* to strengthen a believer's faith.

Ghazālī's methodological doubt and foundationalism

The repudiation and placement of taqlīd

Before Ghazālī embarked on his journey to critically investigate his knowledge, from a young age he had already loosened the shackles of uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*). He noticed the diversity of religious groups and disagreement among Muslims, with each group or sect claiming truth and salvation. However, most of the affiliations were through uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*), and not study or critical inquiry. He states that he witnessed, "the children of Christians always grew up embracing Christianity, and the children of Jews always grew up adhering to Judaism, and the children of Muslims always grew up following the religion of Islam."[74] Here, he recognises that most individuals adopt beliefs uncritically from their teachers and parents, without critical evaluation of their truth or falsity. In *The Deliverance*, he acknowledges that most beliefs are imposed externally, via authority, and not through a valid criterion of truth which may distinguish between truth and falsehood.[75] In contradistinction to Agrippa's first mode, the mode of dispute, Ghazālī is not rejecting truth or knowledge itself on the basis that differences of opinion exist, but his doubt is aimed at undermining uncritical imitation of authority (*taqlīd*) as a means to attain true knowledge. Ghazālī is critical of the instruments of attaining knowledge, not the value of knowledge itself. Thus, the usage of correct instruments may ensure the soundness of the contents of knowledge.

Affirming his observation that individuals grow up in conformity with the religion of their parents, he quotes the following hadith: "Every infant is born endowed with the *fiṭra*: then his parents make him Jew or Christian or Magian."[76] Thus, Ghazālī remarks that he had a deep yearning to know and seek "the true meaning of the human *fiṭra*." He is essentially seeking to know the nature of the primordial disposition and remove the epistemic fetters of upbringing. It is important to note that Ghazālī did not apply his scepticism to Muslim doctrine itself but to the conformism which leads to belief. The primordial disposition (*fiṭra*), in this context, epistemologically speaking, refers to the innate capacity to know the true nature of things, and consequently the ultimate Reality.[77] For Ghazālī, the acquisition of doctrine through blind imitation of authority and convention is in contradiction to the *fiṭra,* which equips one to know and acquire knowledge through one's own innate intuition and rational inference.[78] The spirit of Ghazālī's scepticism was an attitude of critical appraisal of potentially false ideas and irrational reliance on authority.

As we discussed earlier in *The Marvels of the Heart*, Ghazālī discusses the various grades of faith of those who accept Islam. He grades uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*) as the lowest in rank, followed by the faith of the theologians, and then the highest, the Sufis.[79] He states that the faith of the blind adherents stems from their high esteem for their parents and teachers, and that although it is sufficient to attain salvation, they will not draw in proximity to their creator. *Taqlīd* is based on uncritical acceptance of authority and not the certainty of dialectical argumentation or spiritual unveiling; thus, it may be imbued with error. He says that the degree

of "faith" of the blind adherent is the same as that of the Jews and the Christians; however, the latter is mistaken and the former happen to have the truth transmitted to them.

Earlier in *The Marvels*, he states that one of the five causes which veil the heart from true knowledge is the impediment of *taqlīd*.[80] Ardent fanaticism towards theological or legal schools may harden the heart, and prevent receptivity of it to the truth.[81] In *The Scale of Action* (*Mīzān al-ʿamal*), his concluding statement is the following:

> If only these words [prescription to forgo *taqlīd* and to be independent in thought] will lead you to doubt your inherited beliefs so that you devote yourself to seeking [the Truth], that in itself will be beneficial, for doubts lead one to the Truth. For the person who does not doubt does not look; and one who does not look does not have insight; and one who does not truly have insight remains in blindness and delusion.[82]

This section of the text deals not with doctrinal affiliation outside of Islam, but within Islam. He makes reference to both theological and legal affiliation (i.e. Muʿtazilite or Ashʿarite, or *Shāfiʿī* or *Ḥanafī*). Ghazālī did not doubt or question the fundamental tenets of Islam regarding God, prophecy, and the last day, but the divergent opinions within Islam.

The context of the application of this doubt concerns the case of individuals who do not wish to accept their legal or theological doctrine on blind imitation but through reflection and understanding. In *The Scale of Action*, he mentions different degrees of affiliation to doctrine: 1) those who are biased on the basis of following their forefathers, teachers, or land, and thus fanatically defend their doctrine and deride other doctrines;[83] 2) those who follow a doctrine to seek theological and moral educational benefit from its guidance; 3) those who establish doctrine on the basis of understanding and not fanatical adherence to beliefs inherited from their early education. Ghazālī is not necessarily averse to those who follow the second group, but for himself and his companions who seek certainty, he encourages them to "seek the truth by way of inquiry and reflection."[84] He further states that the blind following of a guide may lead one to error, and that the path to truth and certainty is through intellectual independence.[85] The doubt that Ghazālī speaks of in this case is a type of critical inquiry, a means of seeking the truth and of eventual removal of doubt itself. Contrary to Greek scepticism, in Ghazālī's epistemology the very act of doubting is a means to attain certainty, not an end in itself. He does not give merit to an existential doubt (although he recognises it as a constitutive reality of human consciousness), but employs a methodological doubt aimed at achieving certainty.

Although a common theme of repudiation in Ghazālī's writings is uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*) as a source of knowledge, contrary to many scholars,[86] Ghazālī is not an absolute anti-authoritarian figure, but allows *taqlīd* in certain contexts. As much as Ghazālī is an iconoclast in many ways, he recognised the place for authority and embraced the importance of a hierarchy of knowledge. As discussed

in the *Scale*, Ghazālī particularly addresses the elect (*khawāṣ*) in his prescription of undoing the yoke of uncritical imitation to attain the highest stations of certainty. However, in the case of simple believers (*ʿawāmm*), truth should be accepted on the basis of authority. Bakar agrees, stating that Ghazālī's quest for certainty is the concern of himself and an elect few, but not necessarily the interest of the common believer.[87] He states:

> Al-Ghazālī's rejection of *taqlīd* for himself stemmed from his methodological criticism of its inherent limitations, while in accepting it for the simple-minded he was simply affirming an important aspect of the subjective reality of the human order, namely, that individual human beings differ from one another in intellectual capability.[88]

Bakar further argues that *taqlīd* has a positive function in Ghazālī's epistemology, namely, that matters of theological and spiritual importance should be placed under the authority or trust of those who are equipped to interpret and explain knowledge.[89] In Ghazālī's last work, *Restraining the Laity from Engaging in the Science of Kalām* (*Iljām al-ʿawāmm ʿan ʿilm al-kalām*), written in the year of his death, he encourages the laity to accept the teachings and prescriptions of those privileged with spiritual authority.[90] He states that certain meanings are concealed from the layperson because of "his inability and the limits of his strength. Thus, he should not equate himself, for the angels are not equated with the blacksmiths."[91] Ormsby in an explicit manner acknowledges that Ghazālī gave a place to *taqlīd* in his teachings. He states that Ghazālī admits that the function of the intellect itself is to recognise its limitations and assent to a higher authority.[92] Ormsby notes that in some cases, Ghazālī uses a more nuanced term than *taqlīd*. He uses the term *taslīm*, which means consent, ascent, acceptance, or surrender.[93]

In Ghazālī's polemical engagement with the Bāṭinites (Ismāʿīli Shiʿī esotericists), he acknowledges the importance of authoritative teachings. The Bāṭinites professed the need for an infallible teacher, that is, the Imam. Ghazālī, on the other hand, did not reject the need for an infallible teacher, but argued that the infallible teacher is the Prophet Muhammad(ṣ).[94] It is not a matter of whether authoritative teachings are allowed or not, but from whom should we take these teachings. To understand Ghazālī's seemingly conflicting attitude towards *taqlīd*, Zamir makes the pertinent point that a distinction should be drawn between rational *taqlīd* and irrational *taqlīd*.[95] The latter, Ghazālī is averse to; however, the former he encourages as it is when reason *rationally* accepts a higher authority such as revelation, the prophet, or a Sufi Shaykh.[96] Rational *taqlīd* thus submits to a higher epistemic authority which may guide the seeker on his path to truth and certainty. Thus, in reading Ghazālī, we should ask who we are making *taqlīd* of, and what type of *taqlīd* we are speaking of, when branding Ghazālī as an anti-authoritarian figure.[97]

Ghazālī sought to deconstruct his epistemic edifice, and rebuild it on grounds of certainty. He began with the weakest surety of certainty, that is, *taqlīd*. He thus remarks that once conformism to authority has been abandoned, one cannot return to it, for like glass, once it is shattered, it cannot be pieced together, only melted

and reshaped.[98] Following his "abandonment" of uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*), he began to evaluate his other sources of knowledge, namely, sense perception and rationality.

Sense perception, rational judgement, and spiritual intuition – the faculties of knowing

Through Ghazālī applying his criterion of knowledge, he found that he was bereft of any knowledge. The only confidence he had was knowledge attained from sense data (*ḥissiyāt*) and self-evident truths (*ḍarūriyāt*).[99] He thus applied his scepticism to these means of knowing; he aimed at understanding whether the confidence he had in them was genuine or was like the frailty of uncritical imitation of authority. Starting with the lower faculty of knowing, he began to doubt the knowledge attained from sense perception. Ghazālī states that from the sense data of sight, we assume that a shadow is still, and we deny the attribution of motion to it, but from experience and observation, we come to know that it is gradually moving.[100] In a similar instance, he says that sight affirms a star to be the size of a dinar, but through geometrical proofs, we come to know that it is bigger than the earth. He thus states: "In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible fashion."[101]

After inducing doubt in sense perception, Ghazālī turned towards challenging a more advanced epistemological stage, self-evident truths, such as "ten is more than three," "one and the same thing cannot be incipient and eternal, existent and non-existent, or necessary and impossible," and "one and the same thing cannot be simultaneously affirmed and denied."[102] Earlier, we discussed that Ghazālī regards the weight of necessary truths as that which has no doubt attached to it, and is subject to neither error nor trickery. This rank of certainty is now subject to doubt. He argues that rational perception undermined sense perception, but there may be a higher faculty that can undermine and refute the judgement of reason. Ghazālī considered that a higher faculty of knowing may be possible, if we consider that during the state of dreaming, we assume everything we experience to be true; however, when we wake up we realise our beliefs during our sleep were false. In the same sense, there may be a state that would undermine the rational data of the waking state. He thus states, " If you found yourself in such a state, you would be sure that all your rational beliefs were unsubstantial fancies."[103]

After taking himself to have undermined sense perception and necessary truths, Ghazālī speculates regarding a third epistemological stage, the state that exists beyond reason. He remarks that it may either be the spiritual states which Sufis profess to experience or the state of death. He says that the Sufis claim that during their states of spiritual ecstasy, they experience phenomena that are contrary to the data of rational perception. To corroborate the otherworldly nature of the state of death, he references the "hadith of awakening," which says: "Men are asleep: then after they die they awake." He follows this with the following Quranic verse: "[T]oday We have removed your veil and your sight is sharp (Q. 50:22)."[104] This affirms the reality that our experiences of this world are limited, and another state, more lucid

than the waking state, exists. These reflections led to Ghazālī ultimately under-mining rational data and arriving at an epistemic impasse. He states that he could not string together a proof, for it relies on primary truths itself, which he doubted. Ghazālī describes his epistemological crisis as a "mysterious malady," which lasted for two months. Without question, Ghazālī's doubt was of a methodological kind; however, it induced a psychological doubt, too, owing to the fact that he describes it as a sickness in *The Deliverance*. In *The Marvels*, *The Book of Knowledge*, and *The Scale*, he describes doubt as a particular *stage* on the journey to certainty. Doubt as a phenomenon is constitutive to human consciousness itself, not just a feigned operation.[105] However, Ghazālī was in no way a comprehensive sceptic. He explicitly states that he was a "skeptic in fact, but not in utterance and doctrine."[106] Ghazālī took his scepticism regarding rational perception to its logical conclusion, to the extent that he could not affirm or deny anything. He could neither rely on sense data or rationality to save him from this condition. It is at this critical juncture that he found deliverance.

The Divine Light and Ghazālī's foundationalism

Finally, Ghazālī was released from his sceptical impasse through a Divine Light. He states that:

> At length God Most High cured me of that sickness. My soul regained its health and equilibrium and once again I accepted the self-evident data of reason and relied on them with safety and certainty. But that was not achieved by constructing a proof or putting together an argument. On the contrary, it was the effect of a light which God Most High cast into my breast. And that light is the key to most knowledge.[107]

Ghazālī admits that his sceptical journey arrived at a point where he sought the unseekable, that is, primary truths.[108] He states that it was unseekable because it was present in the mind, not outside of it or something acquired. To use Kantanian terms, Ghazālī was essentially affirming the a priori nature of self-evident truths. However, the affirmation was not through a precisely formulated proof, which requires the fundamental truths itself, but through a Divine Light cast in his breast. Ghazālī's foundationalism establishes the intellectual first principles which act as a plinth for rational inquiry. Every demonstration eventually needs premises which require no justification, lest it continues ad infinitum. The establishment of founda-tional knowledge immunises an argument from a sceptical assault. It is important to note Ghazālī's endorsement of demonstration as a means of intellectual certitude or proof.[109] Agrippa's trilemma, which includes the mode from infinite regress, assumption, and circularity cannot undermine a proposition or knowledge itself if prior or foundational knowledge exists. Ghazālī took a sceptical journey, methodo-logically speaking, to arrive at a point of certitude in the fundamental truths. The scepticism Ghazālī employed in the *Deliverance* is without a doubt of a methodo-logical kind which is meant to establish certainty in fundamental axioms.

Ghazālī does not attempt to undermine nor is he sceptical of the sources of knowledge for the sake of being sceptical, but in order to establish knowledge on grounds of certainty. This is a certainty which comes ultimately from a trans-rational source, the Divine Light. It is on this basis that Ghazālī establishes intellectual axioms. To affirm the foundations of intellectual logic, a "logic" from on high is needed.[110] Ghazālī speaks about the Divine Light as an experiential phenomenon but also explains and affirms it through references to the religious sources. He references the Quranic verse "Whomsoever God wishes to guide, He expands his breast for submission (Q. 6:125)."[111] When the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) was asked about "the expansion," he said, "it is a light that God, Glory be to Him, cast into the heart of the believer."[112] In the Quranic exegesis of Al-Rāzī (d. 1210) and al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), they understand the notion of Divine Light or the expansion of the breast as a metaphor for God's Kindness and Favour and a reward for the willing-ness to be guided to truth and belief.[113] Ghazālī references another *ḥadith* which states: "God Most High created men in darkness, then sprinkled on them some of His light." Ghazālī remarks that "from that light, then, the unveiling of truth must be sought"; and secondly that the light sprouts forth from God's generosity at cer-tain times.[114]

From the above verse and those hadith related to it, the light can be under-stood in two senses, as an innate capacity to guide humankind to truth (the a priori inheritance of necessary truths), and as a metaphor of God's grace and favour for the believers and spiritual seekers of truth. This is consistent with Ghazālī's remark that the Divine Light is the key to *most knowledge*, both innate necessary cognitions and spiritual unveilings (*mukāshafa*). Kukkonen remarks that "for Ghazālī, it is not merely special gifts such as prophetic inspiration and mystic visions that have their origin in the divine realm, the necessary truths do, too, and through them all other veracious cognitions."[115] Ghazālī's version of foundationalism posits that necessary truths are a priori. It is not from a "logical source," but a divine source, and hence their certitude. The innate knowledge of these fundamental axioms is by God's grace alone and not by our own intel-lectual volition. The fact that necessary truths are premised on a divine source, safeguards knowledge from scepticism.[116]

In Ghazālī's intellectual journey, his epistemological crisis or sceptical dilemma lasted for a period of two months. Later in his life, he experienced a spiritual crisis which lasted for a period of six months and induced him to leave Baghdad in 1095 CE and go on a spiritual sojourn devoted to purification of his heart and cultivation of virtues for a period of 11 years. In commenting on the path of the Sufis, he states that "for all their motions and quiescences, exterior and interior, are learned from the light of the niche of prophecy. And beyond the *light of prophecy* there is no light on earth from which illumination can be obtained."[117] It is important to notice that the "light [which God cast in his breast] is the key to most knowledge" which saved him from his sceptical impasse is arguably the same light as "the light of prophecy."[118] The descriptions of the two lights are similar. The former gave him certitude in the first principles and the latter was

the key to his experiential certitude. Both the foundations of knowledge and the highest level of certitude are grounded in a higher reality, beyond the realm of the sensory and rational faculty.

To further elaborate upon this foundational knowledge, we turn to Ghazālī's *Book of Knowledge*. In his exposition of the intellect he states that there are four different meanings for the term "intellect" (*ʿaql*). The first meaning regards it as an innate capacity (*gharīza*) which allows humans to acquire knowledge of the speculative sciences and is that which distinguishes humans from animals.[119] Further, Ghazālī affirms that it is a light that God cast into the heart which prepares one to comprehend the reality of things.[120] The second meaning regards it as the ability to discern between the possible and the impossible, like the axiomatic knowledge that two is more than one or that one person cannot be in two places at the same time. Both meanings regard it as an innate disposition,[121] and that it is received intuitively through a Divine Light. Ghazālī states that the existence of the innate intellect in an infant is like the existence of a palm tree in a date pit.[122]

Griffel argues that the second meaning of the term "intellect" (i.e. the necessary truths) is the *fiṭra*. He states that although it is not stated by Ghazālī himself, it is an adaptation from Avicenna's *Book of Definitions*, who termed it "the initial original disposition" (*al-fiṭra al-ūlā*).[123] For Ghazālī, the human *fiṭra* is a means by which all humans can attain the truth, whereas convention or authority is an impediment towards the truth.[124] In the *Scale of Action*, he states that "the human soul is a mine of wisdom and knowledge, embedded in human nature (*fiṭra*)."[125] In the book entitled *Censure of Pride and Vanity* in the *Revival*, Ghazālī states, "I mean by it [the intellect] the inborn original disposition (*fiṭra*) and the initial light through which people perceive the essences of things."[126] The *fiṭra* is an innate intelligence by which God constitutes humankind to ultimately know the reality of things. It is evident in these remarks that Ghazālī regards the necessary truths as an innate disposition (*fiṭra*) of indubitable certainty, attained through a Divine Light, not our own rational efforts.

In *The Marvels*, Ghazālī remarks that the knowledge of the things of this world, the hereafter, and the intellectual realities are beyond the objects of sense perception, and this is a peculiar characteristic of humankind which distinguishes them from the animal.[127] He continues, stating that necessary universal knowledge (*alʿulūm al-kulliyya al-ḍarūriyya*) is unique to the intellect of humankind.[128] Thus, through the unique characteristic of knowledge and human will constituted in his innate disposition (*fiṭra*), mankind is honoured and can draw closer to the creator.[129] Ghazālī mentions two stages in the development of the human. The first is the comprehension of necessary first principles (*alʿulūm al-ḍarūriyya al-awaliyya*) such as knowledge of the possible and the impossible (i.e. a thing cannot be in two places at the same time).[130] He compares it to a writer who only knows of writing: an inkstand, a pen, and separate letters that are not combined. The second stage is the human who has accumulated knowledge of the speculative sciences acquired through thought and experience, an ability he can apply at any time. He says, such a stage is like a writer skilled in writing, and still regarded as a writer even when he is

not writing. He acknowledges this stage as the highest stage in the human, and that it has different grades of contrast in knowledge between individuals. The varying degrees may be attained either through intellectual acquisition or direct spiritual intuition.[131] In our understanding of Ghazālī's epistemology, both the knowledge of necessary truths and the ability to acquire knowledge of the speculative sciences are constitutive of the human primordial disposition (*fiṭra*), and allow one to climb the various stages of truth and certainty.

In Ghazālī's sceptical journey, he unequivocally states that he was not a sceptic of Muslim doctrine. Further, he states that he gained certainty in the fundamentals of Islam: faith in God, revelation (or prophethood), and the Last Day through the practice and study of the rational and religious sciences.[132] He remarks that they "had become deeply rooted in my soul, not because of any specific, precisely formulated proofs, but because of reasons and circumstances and experiences too many to list."[133] In the *Iljām*, Ghazālī remarks that "the original healthy primordial nature (*fiṭra*) is [always] prepared to accept faith without any argument or exposition of the realities of proof."[134] Ghazālī's sceptical inquiry was not directed at revelation or faith but at the instruments of knowing. In particular, regarding the question of God's existence, Ghazālī regarded it as firmly rooted in the human *fiṭra*. In *The Scale of Action,* Ghazālī discusses the following verse: "And when your Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their progeny, and made them bear witness concerning themselves, [asking] 'Am I not your Lord?' they said: yea, we bear witness (Q. 7:172)." Ghazālī says that the knowledge of the existence of God is innately etched upon the soul of mankind even if he may verbally deny the existence of God.[135] The witnessing or the acknowledgement of God's existence took place in the pre-existential world. However, in the corporeal world, humankind may either reject it, forget and disbelieve, or reflect, remember, and believe. In the *Book of Knowledge*, Ghazālī references the following verses: "And if you asked them who created them, they would surely say, 'God' (Q. 43:87)"[136] and "So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth (*ḥanīf*).[137] [Adhere to] the *fiṭra* of Allah upon which He has created [all] people (Q. 30:30)." He comments on these verses, stating that humankind is endowed with a primordial disposition *(fiṭra)* to believe in God and comprehend the reality of things.

In the *Jerusalem Tract* of *The Principles of the Creed* (*Qawāʿid al-ʿaqāʾid*), Ghazālī is more explicit. He remarks that the *fiṭra* is sufficient to believe in the existence of God. He argues that the intent of sending the prophets was not to profess that a God exists but to call to monotheism that "There is no God but God."[138] He states that the existence of God is "inborn in their minds from the time of their birth."[139] His discussion in *The Scale of Action* and *The Book of Knowledge* is repeated in the *Jerusalem Tract*; however, he adds to it, stating: "There is then in the nature of man and in the testimony of the Quran enough evidence to make the *necessity* of [logical] proof (*burhān*) superfluous."[140] Although Ghazālī takes this position, he does not undermine the value of rational arguments to prove God's existence. In fact, he is well known for his conception of the cosmological argument for the existence of God.[141] He continues in the same paragraph to present a syllogism for the existence of God:

However, we wish to produce such supporting proofs in emulation of the well-known among the learned, as follows: It is self-evident to human reason that there must be a cause (*sabab*) for the origination (*ḥudūth*) of anything originated (*ḥādith*). Since the universe is originated it follows that there was a cause for its origination.[142]

Here we can see, on the one hand, Ghazālī affirms the existence of God by virtue of the innate disposition (*fiṭra*), but on the other hand does not repudiate the value of philosophical demonstration (*burhān*) or the *kalām* tradition. Ghazālī anticipated Ibn Taymiyya in the former but not the latter.

Ibn Taymiyya was much more explicit than Ghazālī in the profession that God can be known through one's innate disposition (*fiṭra*). He states that the existence of God is self-evident and requires no reflection to those with a sound *fiṭra*.[143] However, he says that due to contaminated environments, spiritual diseases, and the methods of philosophy and *kalām* (dialectical theology), the *fiṭra* becomes corrupted.[144] In the case of a corrupted *fiṭra*, Ibn Taymiyya recommends a contemplation (*taffakur*) of the "signs" of God, engagement with the Quranic discourse, and acquaintance with the prophetic guidance to awaken one's *fiṭra* and affirm the existence of God.[145] Khan argues that, according to Ibn Taymiyya, the use of syllogistic reasoning to prove the existence of God is not necessary, but it is also an inadequate method to justify the existence of God.[146] He states that the engagement in syllogistic reasoning leads to falling into the trap of Pyrrhonian scepticism. In our earlier discussion, we have shown this is not the case. Ghazālī's foundationalism establishes the first principles, which supports philosophical arguments and prevents falling into a sceptical impasse. Ibn Taymiyya was averse to the methods of the philosophers and theologians (*mutakallimūn*) to prove the existence of God, solely relying on the *fiṭra* as an epistemic justification, whereas Ghazālī embraced the role of *fiṭra* and recognised a place for syllogistic reason to prove the existence of God.

Conclusion

The innate human nature (*fiṭra*) predisposes one to not only epistemologically comprehend the reality of things, and thus acquire knowledge of the speculative sciences or establish axiomatic knowledge, but it also has the innate capacity to know God. This intuitive knowledge is obtained through a trans-rational source. The covenant of *alast*[147] imprints within the human soul a pre-existential consciousness. Thus, humankind has been created upon the primordial disposition (*fiṭra*) to believe in God and comprehend the reality of things.

The idea of the "Divine Light" cast into the breast is a reference to certain knowledge obtained through God's grace, and not rational inference. The intuitive knowledge obtained through God is the foundation by which other knowledge can be established. Ghazālī's sceptical journey led him to affirm this intuitive knowledge which is the foundation of acquired knowledge. In contradistinction to Descartes, Ghazālī's rational foundations were not based on thought itself but on the certitude provided by divine guidance.

Campanini states that:

> [Ghazālī] argued that his intention was to look for the authentic reality of things (*haqīqa*) as a philosophical attitude compels one to do, but at the same time he hastens to point out that the knowledge we can get from *haqīqa* is more "certain" (*yaqīn*) more because of intuition and illumination than because of apodeixis (*burhān*). Admittedly, al-Ghazālī's certainty looks like Descartes's "clear and distinct ideas," but it is allegedly the outcome of intuition and illumination rather than of logical demonstration.[148]

A "logic" from on high acts as the plinth upon which all knowledge is acquired, thus guarding it from a sceptical assault. Ghazālī's scepticism is not like that of classical Greek scepticism or *safsaṭa*. It is not a universal scepticism, or even an urbane scepticism applied to particular matters, but a methodological scepticism aimed at establishing the certainty of our epistemic foundations. Unlike classical scepticism, Ghazālī did not deny that reality can be apprehended or that truth can be attained, but rather aimed to actively seek it. The doubt he applied was not aimed at Muslim doctrine but at the means or sources of attaining knowledge, such as *taqlīd*, sense perception, and necessary truths.

Ghazālī's application of doubt shows an attitude of critical inquiry as opposed to fanatical adherence to a particular group or set of ideas. The act of doubting is not an end in itself but a call to reflection and understanding as a means to the attainment of certainty. Inasmuch as Ghazālī was an iconoclast of blind imitation and false ideas, he respected and submitted to a higher epistemic authority such as scripture, prophetic guidance, or religious authority.

Doubt is not just methodological but an existential state too. It is a stage prior to the stages progressing towards certainty, which is the absence of doubt. Ghazālī is not in the least a religious sceptic; in fact, he advocates for the application of demonstrative arguments to dispel the doubts plaguing believers and strengthen their faith.

It is clear that Ghazālī embraced philosophical demonstration to dispel doubts and establish certainty. On the other hand, Ghazālī was saved from his epistemological crisis not through rationality but a Divine Light which established the foundations of knowledge. This Divine Light is the key to both innate necessary cognitions and the highest level of certitude attained through spiritual unveilings or the mystical path.

In this chapter, we have discussed Ghazālī's scepticism and his quest to establish the certainty of our epistemic foundations. In the following chapter, we will discuss the certainty of philosophical demonstration and Ghazālī's polemic with the Ismāʿīlī Bāṭinites.

Notes

1 According to Van Ess, the works of the Greek Sceptics were not translated into Arabic. However, Muslim theologians were acquainted with their ideas through their Greek interlocutors (i.e. Aristotle). See van Ess, "Skepticism in Islamic Religious Thought."

 2 Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 66.
 3 Al-Ghazālī, *Faith and Practice of al-Ghazálí': A Translation of the "Deliverance from Error" and "The Beginning of Guidance,"* 24; Al-Ghazālī, *Deliverance from Error and Mystical Union with the Almighty*.
 4 Cooper and Hutchinson, "Apology," 21. Emphasis added.
 5 Vogt, "Ancient Skepticism."
 6 Ibid.
 7 Hazlett, *A Critical Introduction to Skepticism*, 16.
 8 Ibid., 17.
 9 Report from Timon cited in Vogt, "Ancient Skepticism."
10 Ibid.
11 Bett, "Pyrrho."
12 Vogt, "Ancient Skepticism."
13 Williams, "The Agrippan Argument and Two Forms of Skepticism," 122.
14 Vogt, "Ancient Skepticism."
15 Ibid.
16 Williams, "The Agrippan Argument and Two Forms of Skepticism," 121.
17 Ibid., 122.
18 Hazlett, *A Critical Introduction to Skepticism*, 12.
19 Ibid.
20 For a comprehensive response to Agrippa's trilemma through Ibn Taymiyya's notion of *fiṭra,* see Khan, "Atheism and Radical Scepticism," 36–44.
21 Vogt, "Ancient Skepticism."
22 Ibid.
23 Hazlett, *A Critical Introduction to Skepticism*, 24.
24 Cited in Ibid.
25 Vogt, "Ancient Skepticism."
26 Hazlett, *A Critical Introduction to Skepticism*, 15.
27 Ibid., 16.
28 Al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 222.
29 Al-Juwaynī, *Burhān fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, 113–114.
30 The text *(matn)* of *Al-ʿAqāid al-Nasafiyya* reproduced in Taftāzānī's commetary, Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ Al-ʿAqāid al-Nasafīya*, 85–93.
31 Ibid., 110.
32 Ibid., 111.
33 In Islamic law, the punishment of a person by fire is prohibited. Al-Taftāzānī merely uses this example as a rhetorical remark to make a point.
34 In Khan's paper titled "Atheism and Radical Scepticism," he agrees that the term, *safsaṭa,* is not limited to Hellenic thinkers labelled "sophists." It may include epistemic trends in their philosophy but generally refers to scepticism.
35 Philo of Alexandria applied the term "sophist" to mean "sceptic" as well; see van Ess, "Skepticism in Islamic Religious Thought," 84.
36 For an overview of scepticism in the Islamic tradition, see Heck, *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion*.
37 Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿilm*, 73. It is related to a *duʿāʾ* attributed to Muhammad (ṣ): "*O Allah! Show me the reality of all things as it [really] is."*
38 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, 46; Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 63.

39 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:4, 13.

40 Ibid., 3:2–4. According to Treiger, Ghazālī's noetics closely resembles Avicenna's; however, the usage of the term *qalb* is to defuse it from its philosophical connotation and make it more palatable to the religious scholars (*ʿulamā*). See *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and Its Avicennian Foundation*, 19.

41 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:3.

42 Ibid., 3:5.

43 Ibid., 3:13.

44 The term *al-maʿlumāt* refers to the specific nature of things and has been translated as "intelligibles" by Walter James Skellie in his translation of the *Kitāb sharḥ ʿajaʾib al-qalb*.

45 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:13–14.

46 The trust mentioned is a reference to the Qur'anic verse: "Truly We offered the Trust unto the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it, and were wary of it – yet man bore it (Q. 33:72)."

47 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:14. Connected to this idea is a hadith *qudsi* cited in the *Marvels*: it is narrated that God said: "My earth cannot contain me, neither my heaven, but the tender and calm heart of my servant can contain Me." Also in the following hadith, Ibn Umar narrates that "The Messenger was asked, 'O Messenger of God, where is God in the earth or in heaven?' He replied, 'In the hearts of His believing creatures.'" These hadith are present in Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī's *Qūt al-qulūb* and ʿAbd al-Karīm Qushayrī's *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*. Al-Ghazālī, *The Marvels of the Heart: Translation of Kitāb sharḥ ʿajāʾib al-qalb, book 21 of the Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 40.

48 See Qur'an 6:59, 6:12, 50:4, and 57:22.

49 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:30.

50 Ghazālī notes that this process of unveiling may take place either during sleep, in a waking state, or be completely lifted as a result of death.

51 Ghazālī thus speaks of four levels of existence: 1) the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*), 2) the phenomenological existence (*ḥaqīqī*), 3) the imaginative existence (*khayālī*), and 4) intellectual existence (*ʿaqlī*). See Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:31.

52 Ibid., 3:18.

53 Al-Ghazālī, *The Marvels of the Heart: Translation of Kitāb sharḥ ʿajāʾib al-qalb, book 21 of the Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 48.

54 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, 47; Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 64.

55 This is consistent with Ibn ʿArabī's understanding in the *Makkan Openings*, where he states that "the knowledge of certainty" is what is provided by an indication *(dalīl)* in which there are no obscurities. Discussed in Nasr et al., *The Study Quran*, 1556.

56 Cited in Kukkonen, "Al-Ghazālī's Skepticism Revisited," 47.

57 Al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge: Book 1 of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 214; al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿilm*, 188.

58 Al-Bayhaqi's *Shuʿab al-īmān,* 9265 as cited in Al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge: Book 1 of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 214.

59 Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, *al-Yaqin*, 7 as cited in Ibid.; al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿilm*, 188.

60 Abū Ṭālib al-Makki, *Qūt al-qulūb,* 1:135 cited in Al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge: Book 1 of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 215.

61 al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿilm*, 189–191.

62 He refers to this as the "natural disposition of the intellect, such as knowledge of the impossibility of a phenomenon without a cause." Cited from Al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge: Book 1 of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 218; al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿilm*, 191.

63 *Tawātur* is a report that is deemed true on the basis that the multiplicity of the sources is large enough that it is impossible for the narrators to agree on a lie.

64 This is consistent with his logical works in which he states that these five judgements can be applied as premises to construct a demonstrative syllogism. To clarify the difference between empirical observation and sense perception, Ghazālī states in the *Maqāsid* that empirical observation is a combination of the intellect and the senses such as the judgement that "wine intoxicates" and sense perception is a direct observation such as when we say that the "light of the moon increases and decreases" or "the book is green."

65 al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿilm*, 191–192.

66 Adapted translation of Al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge: Book 1 of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 219.

67 In the final chapter, we will discuss the certainty of the Sufis, and its relationship to both the science of unveiling (*ʿilm al-mukāshafa*) and the science of praxis (*ʿilm al-muʿāmala*). An important theme included in this discussion will be the inextricable relationship between knowledge (*ʿilm*) and action (*ʿaml*).

68 Bakar, "The Place of Doubt in Islamic Epistemology: Al-Ghazzali's Philosophical Experience."

69 Al-Ghazālī, *The Marvels of the Heart: Translation of Kitāb sharḥ ʿajāʾib al-qalb, book 21 of the Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 41; Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:15.

70 Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt al-anwār): A Parallel English-Arabic Text Translated, Introduced and Annotated*, 3.

71 Ibid. See Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of the grades of light in the *Niche*.

72 Götz, "The Quest for Certainty: Al-Ghazālī and Descartes," 13.

73 Yaqub, *Ghazālī's Moderation in Belief: al-Iqtiṣād fī al-iʿtiqād translated with an interpretive essay and notes*, 13.

74 Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 63; Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, 46.

75 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, 46–47.

76 Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 63. See Saḥiḥ al-Bukhari 4775. For a comprehensive overview of the concept *fiṭra*, see Mohamed, *Fitrah: The Islamic Concept of Human Nature*. For a study of the concept of *fiṭra* in Ghazālī, see Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī's Use of 'Original Human Disposition' (Fiṭra) and Its Background in the Teachings of al-Fārābi and Avicenna."

77 See *Fitrah: The Islamic Concept of Human Nature*, 16. Mohamed states that "*Fiṭrah*, in this sense [association with Islam], is the faculty, which He has created in mankind, of knowing Allah. It is the natural constitution with which the child is created in his mother's womb, whereby he is capable of accepting the religion of truth."

78 Al-Ghazālī, *A Return to Purity in Creed: Translation of Iljām al-ʿawāmm ʿan ʿilm al-kalām*, 121. In the *Iljām*, Ghazālī remarks that "the original healthy primordial nature (*fiṭra*) is [always] prepared to accept faith without any argument or exposition of the realities of proof."

79 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:15.

80 Ibid., 3:13–14.

81 He repeats the same advice in the 22nd book of the *Revival,* stating that fanatical devotion to a doctrine is a barrier to truth. He advises that the only devotion should be to God's oneness and that Muhammad (ṣ) is the messenger of God. To render one's faith sincere, one should detach oneself from any other object of worship except God. See Ibid., 3:75.

82 Al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, 409; Al-Ghazālī, *The Scale of Action: Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's Mīzān al-ʿamal*.

83 Ghazālī says in *The Scale of Action*: "A [good] analogy of the student [whose inherited beliefs are deeply rooted] is that he is like a piece of paper upon which is inscribed letters [in ink] so deeply that they cannot be removed by burning or tearing it. Such a person is corrupted in his nature, and trying to reform him would be futile. So if you mention to him anything that conflicts with what he has been taught in his youth, he will not be persuaded. He is bent upon not being convinced, and tries his utmost to create stratagems to refute." Al-Ghazālī, *The Scale of Action: Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's Mīzān al-ʿamal*. Al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, 408.

84 Al-Ghazālī, *The Scale of Action: Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's Mīzān al-ʿamal*; Al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, 409.

85 Al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, 409.

86 See Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazālī's Supreme Way to Know God"; Luis Xavier López-Farjeat, "Al-Ghazālī on Knowledge (*ʿilm*) and Certainty (*yaqīn*) in al-Munqidh Min aḍ–dalal and in al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm," in *Islam and Rationality: The Impact of Al-Ghazzali*, ed. Georges Tamer (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), 229–252; Rayan, "Al-Ghazali's Method of Doubt."

87 Bakar, "The Place of Doubt in Islamic Epistemology: Al-Ghazzali's Philosophical Experience." In the *Iljām*, Ghazālī clearly defined the layperson as the philologist, the grammarian, the *ḥadīth* specialist, the exegete, the jurist, and the theologian. Whereas the elect are those that have achieved spiritual acquaintance *(maʿrifa)*. See Al-Ghazālī, *A Return to Purity in Creed: Translation of Iljām al-ʿawāmm ʿan ʿilm al-kalām*, 42.

88 Bakar, "The Place of Doubt in Islamic Epistemology: Al-Ghazzali's Philosophical Experience."

89 Ibid.

90 Cited in Ormsby, "The Taste of Truth: The Structure of Experience in Ghazālī's Munqidh," 136–137. Al-Ghazālī, "Iljām *al-ʿawāmm ʿan ʿilm al-kalām*."

91 Al-Ghazālī, *A Return to Purity in Creed: Translation of Iljām al-ʿawāmm ʿan ʿilm al-kalām*, 68.

92 Ormsby, "The Taste of Truth: The Structure of Experience in Ghazālī's Munqidh," 136.

93 Wehr and Cowan, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*.

94 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, 79–91.

95 Zamir, "Descartes and Al-Ghazālī: Doubt, Certitude and Light," 233.

96 Ibid.

97 In the negative use of the term "*taqlid*," we may translate it as "uncritical imitation," whereas in its positive application, it may be termed "critical acceptance of authoritative teachings"; or more appropriately the Arabic term, *taslīm*.

98 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, 54–55. After dropping his conformism, it led him on a journey of seeking the truth among the claimants of truth, namely, the theologians (*mutakalimūn*), the Bāṭinites, the philosophers, and the Sufis.

99 Ibid., 48.

100 Ibid., 49. He applied his doubt to sight as it is the strongest of all sense perceptions.

101 Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 65.

102 Ibid., 49.

103 Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 65. Ibid., 50–51.

104 Abdel Haleem, *The Quran*.

105 Götz, "The Quest for Certainty: Al-Ghazālī and Descartes," 13.

106 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, 51; Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 66.

107 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, 51–52; Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 66.

108 In Ghazālī's logical treatises, such as the *Miʿyār al-ʿilm*, *Miḥak al-naẓar fī al-manṭiq*, the logical section of the *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*, or the introduction to *al-Mustaṣfā min ʿilm al-uṣūl*, he discusses the different types of judgements. In the *Maqāṣid* he states that judgements, or first principles, such as "things equal to the same thing are equal to each other" or "two is more than one," require no reflection but are understood immediately. Judgements of lesser epistemic weight, such as sense perception or authority, are known without prior investigation as well. These form part of the preceding knowledge or premises applied in the investigative process. Ghazālī mentions 13 types of judgements not established through argumentation and used as premises to construct a syllogism. They are: "first principles," judgements of perception, judgements of experience, unanimous narration, propositions containing in themselves syllogisms by their very nature, estimative opinion, customary beliefs, authoritative statements, admissions, semblances, opinions which appear to be generally accepted, presumptions, and imaginary things. He states that the first five judgements mentioned can be used in a demonstrative syllogism. The other premises are used in a dialectical syllogism. He remarks that first principles do not come from the senses, for these only grasp a limited number of things; it is "established in the intellect as a universal and it is impossible for the intellect to be separated from it"; they are made necessary by the nature of the mind as pure intelligence. In the parlance of the philosophers, this would be Ghazālī's exposition of the necessary truths; however, in the *Deliverance* he shows that it is known to the mind through the grace of God. Gershon B., "The Logical Part of al-Ghazālī's Maqāṣid al-falāsifa."

109 Later in the *Deliverance*, Ghazālī discusses his derision for dialectical argumentation *(jadal)* as a means of establishing certitude as opposed to the philosophical proof *(burhān)*.

110 Rayan, "Al-Ghazali's Method of Doubt," 170.

111 See also the Q. 39:22.

112 Bayhaqī, *Zuhd*, #974; Ibn al-Mubārak, #300; {Ḥākim, #7944; Ibn Abī Shaybah, #35317, #35318} cited in Nasr et al., *The Study Quran*, 1923. The *ḥadīth* continues, stating that a sign of this light is "Withdrawal from the mansion of delusion and turning to the mansion of immortality." Al-Bayhaqi's *Shu'ab al-īmān* (10068) cited in Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, 52.

113 Nasr et al., *The Study Quran*, 444.

114 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, 52; Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 66. The latter remark is a reference to the *ḥadīth* Ghazālī

mentions: "Your Lord, in the days of your lifetime, sends forth gusts of grace: do you then put yourselves in the way of them!"

115 Kukkonen, "Al-Ghazālī's Skepticism Revisited," 49.

116 This shows Ghazālī's closer affiliation to Augustine than to Descartes.

117 Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 94.

118 For a comprehensive discussion of the parallels between the two lights, see Zamir, "Descartes and Al-Ghazālī: Doubt, Certitude and Light," 228.

119 al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb Al-ʿilm*, 220.

120 Ghazālī references Al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī's definition.

121 In the *Book of Knowledge*, he states that the other two are acquired (*muktasab*) through effort. The third meaning refers to empirical knowledge which is derived from the innate disposition of the intellect and the necessary truths. The fourth meaning is the ultimate goal (practical reason), which is the capacity to distinguish between the consequences of one's actions. In reference to this discussion, Ghazālī quotes a few lines of poetry of Imam Ali, who said: "I saw the intellect as two, distinct unto another. One a disposition, one acquired through learning. [Knowledge acquired through] hearing afford[s] no benefit if there is not innate disposition to it. Just as the sun renders no benefit when the light of the eye is precluded." See al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿilm*, 220–221. Al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge: Book 1 of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 256. In the *Scale of Action*, Ghazālī states that "the importance of the innate intellect [to the soul] is comparable to the importance of sight to the body and the importance of the acquired intellect is comparable to the importance of the light of the sun." Al-Ghazālī, *The Scale of Action: Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's Mīzān al-ʿamal*. Al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, 337. According to Treiger, drawing insight from *The Niche* and *The Deliverance,* the third meaning actually refers to syllogistic reasoning and the fourth meaning refers to prophetic knowledge (accessible to both prophets and saints). He also states that the four meanings of the intellect discussed in *The Scale, The Marvels,* and *The Book of Knowledge* correspond to and are most probably inspired by Avicenna; however, Ghazālī gradually drops the philosophical terminology for that employed by the Mutakallimūn, and introduces references to Sufis such as al-Muḥāsibī. See *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and Its Avicennian Foundation*, 23–29.

122 Al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, 337.

123 Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī's Use of 'Original Human Disposition' (*fiṭra*) and Its Background in the Teachings of al-Fārābi and Avicenna," 7.

124 Reference to the hadith cited earlier, that all infants are born with the *fiṭra*.

125 Al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, 334; Al-Ghazālī, *The Scale of Action: Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's Mīzān al-ʿamal*.

126 Cited in and translation by Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī's Use of 'Original Human Disposition' (Fiṭra) and Its Background in the Teachings of al-Fārābi and Avicenna," 6.

127 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, 3:8.

128 Ibid.

129 In *The Marvels*, Ghazālī makes reference to the unique characteristic which separates mankind from the animal; however, he does not use the term *gharīza* but *fiṭra*. This goes to show that he applies these terms interchangeably. Even his definitions of the different types of intellect overlap in the various texts (i.e. *The Marvels* and *The Book of Knowledge*); they are not watertight compartments.

130 The two stages of development in a human mentioned in *The Marvels* are essentially akin to the different meanings of the "intellect" (*ʿaql*) discussed in *The Book of Knowledge*.

131 Al-Ghazzali, *The Marvels of the Heart: Translation of Kitāb sharḥ ʿajāʾib al-qalb, Book 21 of the Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 23. Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:8. Ghazālī remarks that, "in this stage are seen the varying degrees of the learned (*ʿulamāʾ*), the wise (*ḥukamā*), prophets (*anbiyā*), and saints (*awliyāʾ*)."

132 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalal*, 93.

133 Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 19.

134 Al-Ghazālī, *A Return to Purity in Creed: Translation of Iljām al-ʿawāmm ʿan ʿilm al-kalām*, 121.

135 Al-Ghazālī, *The Scale of Action: Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's Mīzān al-ʿamal*.

136 In the *Jerusalem Tract* of the *Qawāʿid al-ʿaqāʾid*, instead of this verse he uses the verse "Can there be any doubt about God, the Creator of the heavens and earth (Q. 14:10)?"

137 The term *ḥanīf* is a reference to those who believed in the oneness of God.

138 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 1:105.

139 Ibid. Nabih Amin Faris, *The Foundations of the Articles of Faith: A Translation with Notes of The Kitāb Qawāʿid al-Aqāʾid of Ghazzali's Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1999), 59.

140 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 1:106. Al-Ghazālī, "Al-Ghazālīs Tract on Dogmatic Theology: A Translation of the Jerusalem Tract," 98.

141 See the *First Proposition* of *the Moderation in Belief* (*Iqtiṣād fī al-iʿtiqād*), for an elaborate exposition of the cosmological argument, and on recent scholarship surrounding Ghazālī's cosmological argument, see William Lane Craig's *The Kalam Cosmological Argument*.

142 Al-Ghazālī, "Al-Ghazālīs Tract on Dogmatic Theology: A Translation of the Jerusalem Tract," 98.

143 See Hallaq, "Ibn Taymiyya on the Existence of God."

144 Ibid., 56. Khan, "Atheism and Radical Scepticism," 33.

145 Shihadeh, "The Existence of God," 198. This is a teleological argument of sorts. See also, Khan, "Atheism and Radical Scepticism," 28.

146 Khan, "Atheism and Radical Scepticism," 30.

147 In Qurʾān 7:172, the covenant of *alast* states: "Am I not your Lord?" they said: yea, we bear witness (*ʾa lastu bi-rabbikum*? …)."

148 Campanini, *Al-Ghazali and the Divine*, 34–35.

Bibliography

Abdel Haleem, M. A. S. *The Quran*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Abrahamov, Binyamin. "Al-Ghazālī's Supreme Way to Know God." *Studia Islamica*, no. 77 (1993): 141–168.

Bakar, Osman. "The Place of Doubt in Islamic Epistemology: Al-Ghazzali's Philosophical Experience." In *The History and Philosophy of Islamic Science*, 39–60. Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1999.

Bett, Richard. "Pyrrho." plato.stanford.edu, 2018. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pyrrho/.

Campanini, Massimo. *Al-Ghazali and the Divine*. New York: Routledge, 2019.

Cooper, John M., and D. S. Hutchinson, eds. "Apology." In *Plato: Complete Works*, 17–36. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.

Ess, Josef van. "Skepticism in Islamic Religious Thought." In *God and Man in Contemporary Islamic Thought*. Edited by Charles Malik, 83–98. Beirut: Centennial, 1972.

Faris, Nabih Amin. *The Foundations of the Articles of Faith: A Translation with Notes of The Kitāb Qawāʿid al-Aqāʾid of Ghazzāli's Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*. Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1999.

Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *A Return to Purity in Creed: Translation of Iljām al-ʿawāmm ʿan ʿilm al-kalām*. Translated by Abdullah bin Hamid Ali. Philadelphia: Lamp Post Productions, 2008.

———. "Al-Ghazālīs Tract on Dogmatic Theology: A Translation of the Jerusalem Tract." Translated by A.L. Tibawi. *Islamic Quarterly* IX (1965): 65–122.

———. *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*. Beirut: Dar al-Minhāj, 2019.

———. *Deliverance from Error and Mystical Union with the Almighty*. Translated by Muhammad Abūlaylah. Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2001.

———. *Faith and Practice of al-Ghazálí': A Translation of the "Deliverance from Error" and "The Beginning of Guidance."* Translated by W. Montgomery Watt. Oxford: One World, 1953.

———. *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*. Translated by Richard J. McCarthy. Boston: University of Beirut, 1980.

———. *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*. Vol. 3. Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1982.

———. *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*. Vol. 1. Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1982.

———. "Iljām al-ʿawāmm ʿan ʿilm al-kalām." In *Majmuʿāt al-rasāʾil al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, 319–355. Cairo: Al-maktaba al-tawfiqiyya, n.d.

———. *Kitāb al-ʿilm*. Damascus: Dār Saʿdi al-dīn, 2009.

———. *Mīzān al-ʿamal*. Edited by Sulayman Dunya. Cairo: Darul Maʿarif, 1964.

———. *The Book of Knowledge: Book 1 of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*. Translated by Kenneth Honerkamp. Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2015.

———. *The Marvels of the Heart: Translation of Kitāb sharḥ ʿajāʾib al-qalb, book 21 of the Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*. Translated by Walter James Skellie. Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2010.

———. *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt al-anwār): A parallel English-Arabic text translated, introduced and annotated*. Translated by David Buchman. Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1998.

———. *The Scale of Action: Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's Mīzān al-ʿamal*. Translated by Yasien Mohamed, forthcoming.

Gershon B., Chertoff. "The Logical Part of al-Ghazālī's Maqāṣid al-Falāsifa." PhD diss., Columbia University, 1952.

Götz, Ignacio L. "The Quest for Certainty: Al-Ghazālī and Descartes." *Journal of Philosophical Research* 28 (2003): 1–22.

Griffel, Frank. "Al-Ghazālī's Use of 'Original Human Disposition' (*Fiṭra*) and Its Background in the Teachings of al-Fārābi and Avicenna." *The Muslim World* 102 (2012): 1–32.

Hallaq, Wael. "Ibn Taymiyya on the Existence of God." *Acta Orientalia* 52 (1991): 49–69.

Hazlett, Allan. *A Critical Introduction to Skepticism*. Bloomsbury Critical Introductions to Contemporary Epistemology. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014.

Heck, Paul. *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion*. London and New York: Routledge, 2014.

Al-Juwaynī, ʿAbd al-Malik. *Burhān fī uṣūl al- fiqh*. Edited by ʿAbdu al-ʿAẓīm al-Dīb. Cairo: Dar al-Anṣār, 1980.

Khan, Nazir. "Atheism and Radical Scepticism." *Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research*, 2020.

Kukkonen, Taneli. "Al-Ghazālī's Skepticism Revisited." In *Rethinking the History of Skepticism*. Edited by Henrik Lagurlund, 29–59. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010.

López-Farjeat, Luis Xavier. "Al-Ghazālī on Knowledge (*ʿilm*) and Certainty (*yaqīn*) in *al-Munqidh min aḍ-dalal* and in *al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*." In *Islam and Rationality: The Impact of al-Ghazālī*. Edited by Georges Tamer, 229–252. Leiden: Brill, 2015.

Al-Māturīdī, Abū Mansūr. *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*. Edited by Bekir Topaloğlu and Muhammed Aruçi. Beirut: Dār Sader, 2001.

Mohamed, Yasien. *Fitrah: The Islamic Concept of Human Nature*. London: Ta-Ha Publishers, 1996.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, Caner K. Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph Lumbard, and Mohammed Rustom, eds. *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 2015.

Ormsby, Eric. "The Taste of Truth: The Structure of Experience in Ghazālī's Munqidh." In *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*. Edited by Wael Hallaq and Donald Little, 133–152. Leiden: Brill, 1991.

Rayan, Sobhi. "Al-Ghazali's Method of Doubt." *Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA)* 38, no. 2 (2004): 162–173.

Shihadeh, Ayman. "The Existence of God." In *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*. Edited by Timothy Winter, 197–217. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Al-Taftāzānī, Saʿdal-Din. *Sharḥ Al-ʿAqāid al-Nasafīya*. Damascus: Dār Al Taqwa, 2020.

Treiger, Alexander. *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and its Avicennian Foundation*. London and New York: Routledge, 2012.

Vogt, Katja. "Ancient Skepticism." plato.stanford.edu, 2018. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/skepticism-ancient/.

Wehr, Hans, and Milton J. Cowan. *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. New York: Spoken Language Services, 1971.

Williams, Michael. "The Agrippan Argument and Two Forms of Skepticism." New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Yaqub, Aladdin M. *Ghazālī's Moderation in Belief: al-Iqtiṣād fī al-Iʿtiqād translated with an interpretive essay and notes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Zamir, Syed Rizwan. "Descartes and Al-Ghazālī: Doubt, Certitude and Light." *Islamic Studies* 49, no. 2 (2010): 219–251.

2 Certainty at the nexus between reason and religious authority

Ghazālī is famous not only for his *The Revival of the Religious Sciences* (*Iḥyāʾ ʿūlum al-dīn*), but also his polemical works aimed at the Bāṭinites (Ismāʿīlī Shiʿī esotericists) and the philosophers. Ghazālī's polemical engagement with them was an attempt to place reason and religious authority in their proper place. He sought to undermine the scepticism (i.e. anti-rationalism) of the Bāṭinites and establish the proper place for reason and the application of philosophical demonstration. On the other hand, he applied a scepticism to subdue the philosophers and show the limitations of reason in establishing necessary knowledge about God. This is aimed at the vindication of the epistemic authority of prophetic revelation (discussion to follow in the next chapter). In this chapter, we aim to discuss Ghazālī's dialectic with the Ismāʿīlī Shiʿī with a focus on *The Infamies of the Esotericists and the Virtues of the Mustaẓhirites* (*Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniyya wa al-faḍāil al-mustaẓhiriyya*) and *The Straight Balance* (*al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*). We attempt to show that the acquisition of certainty in Ghazālī's thought is at the nexus of both reason and religious authority.

Ghazālī's critique of Bāṭinite scepticism in *The Infamies* and his rational support for the validity of reason

The Infamies of the Esotericists and the Virtues of the Mustaẓhirites is a polemical work aimed at critiquing Ismāʿīlī Shiʿī theology. At the time Ghazālī wrote the work, the Ismāʿīlī Shiʿī of the Alamut State, founded by Ḥasan-i Ṣabāḥ, were launching a theological and political revolt against the Sunni order of the Abbasid–Seljuk duoarchy.[1] Two years after the Ismāʿīlī assassination of Ghazālī's patron, the Seljuk vizier Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 1092), Ghazālī was commissioned to write *The Infamies of the Esotericists* in the year 1094 CE and dedicated it to the young Caliph of the Abbasid dynasty, al-Mustaẓhir billāh (d. 1118).

Of the many appellations that exist, Ghazālī uses the term *al-Bāṭīniyya* (the Esotericists) most often.[2] It is a reference to their claim that the Quran and prophetic traditions have inner (*bāṭin*) or symbolic meanings corresponding with their literal form. They reject the literal meaning, stating that they are mere forms for the ignorant, and that the truth or reality conveyed by the inner meaning is for

the intelligent.[3] In addition, they regard the literal meanings as bondage to the prescriptions of the law. However, those who embrace the inner meanings are free from its bondage.[4] The appellation applicable to our discussion and which Ghazālī deems most appropriate is *al-Taʾlīmiyya* (the Authoritarians), since they are sceptical of the validity of reason and call to the authoritative instruction (*taʾlīm*) of the Infallible Imam. The Bāṭinites deem authoritative instruction to be superior to the intellect of men in acquiring truth. Their sceptical approach induces doubt in the intellect on the basis that reason manifests mutually opposing or contradictory conclusions. Thus, they insist that the reliance on authoritative instruction (*taʾlīm*) and learning from the Imam is necessary.[5]

In the third chapter of *The Infamies of the Esotericists*, Ghazālī outlines several ruses of the Bāṭinites. Among them are: "inducing doubt" and "suspending (*taʾlīq*)." He states that the method of inducing doubt is meant to change the belief of a prospect[6] through undermining his firmly held beliefs. This is achieved through questioning the wisdom of the prescribed law, the ambiguity in the verses of the Quran and aspects of revelation that do not make "rational sense."[7] Through this type of scepticism applied to the revealed text, the Bāṭinites attempt to undermine the literal meaning and create a desire to seek the esoteric meaning.

The method of suspending is not meant to suppress these doubts but to apply strategies of deferment, to call to patience, and to leave the prospect in suspense. This suspense further interiorises the doubt and creates a burning desire to eventually learn the mysteries of revelation from their Imam after taking a covenant of secrecy. It is important to note that the scepticism applied by the Bāṭinites is not meant to cause a permanent state of ignorance and suspension of knowledge (and thereafter attain tranquillity), as in the case of Pyrrhonian scepticism, but to seek the truth from authority through undermining the capacity of the mind to attain knowledge by itself.

Among the various theological doctrines they hold,[8] Ghazālī mainly cares to address those which they publicly profess and agree on, that is, their invalidation of reason and the necessity of learning from the Imam (*taʾlīm*). After giving an account of it, he quickly dismisses much of their doctrine, stating that it is from the Zoroastrians, Dualists and Philosophers, and that it has already been dealt with in his works of *kalām* (theology). At the centre of Bāṭinite doctrine is the profession that access to the truth of things and the interpretation of the literal meanings of the Quran and the prophetic traditions are through the Infallible Imam, who is present in every age. The Imam and the Prophet are both infallible and have knowledge of the reality of things. However, the Prophet alone receives revelation (*waḥy*).[9]

Avoiding a straw man argument, Ghazālī reproduces in their strongest form five proofs of the Bāṭinites' invalidation of the mind's reasoning.[10] The **first proof** is the invalidation of reason on the basis that for every opinion, there exists a contrary opinion by an adversary. Both opponents use reason, but arrive at opposing conclusions. The **second proof** is in the case of a judge who falls short in legal or rational judgement and seeks recourse to authoritative instruction to guide his reasoning. This is a contradiction, for at the same time that he advocates for reason he seeks to learn through an authority (*taʾlīm*). Similar to the first proof, the **third**

proof is their proposition that "oneness is the indication of the truth, and multiplicity is the indication of the false."[11] The Bāṭinites associate multiplicity and disagreement with the people of reason, whereas oneness and agreement is of the doctrine of *taʾlīm*. The **fourth proof** is the case of the advocate of reason who at one time believes something to be the truth by virtue of his intellect, but at a later time recognises his error and believes in the truth of the opposing view. At the later time, he holds firm to his opinion as he did before, without realising his epistemic frailty. The Bāṭinites argue that the initial state is no different from the later state, for the faculty of reason has not changed. The intellect is still deficient in attaining the truth. Thus, what is there to prevent another misjudgement? The **fifth proof** is textual, whereby they reproduce the prophetic narration that the saved sect is the people of custom (*ahl al-sunna*) and consensus (*al-jamāʿa*). This is regarded as what the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) and his companions were doing.[12] The Bāṭinites interpret this as following the authority (*taʾlīm*) of the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) and not their individual reasoning.

Ghazālī's response to the **second proof** (I will deal with the first proof below) of the Bāṭinites is to argue that he is not in actual fact averse to *taʾlīm*.[13] It has a rightful place. He systematically divides cognition into three categories linking it to the importance of authoritative instruction (*taʾlīm*). The first category is that of hearing and learning, regarding the events of the past and the evidentiary miracles of the Prophet. He states that through sound transmission from the infallible Prophet, the reality of the resurrection and the life of the hereafter are known. The second category are intellectual cognitions. The importance of a teacher is not to merely imitate him in his teachings, but to learn his method of reasoning and arrival at intellectual judgements. Here, Ghazālī is not appealing to an infallible teacher (Imam) but a teacher to teach an infallible method of acquiring truth, that is, philosophical demonstration. The third category is knowledge of religious edicts dealing with the lawful (*ḥalāl*) and unlawful (*ḥarām*), the obligatory (*wājib*) and recommended (*mandūb*) acts, and so on. The source of this is from revelation (Quran) and the prophetic tradition (Sunna). In most cases, it is known through probable transmission, and in some cases through unanimous transmission (*tawātur*). However, texts are limited and potential scenarios are unlimited. Thus, the sources (texts) do not provide a legal verdict for every scenario. Therefore, upon Muʿādh ibn Jabal's travel to Yemen, the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) approved of him exercising effort in personal judgement (*ijtihād al-raʾy*) *after* he does not find a legal judgement in the Quran and the Sunna.[14] Here we see Ghazālī affirming the use of revelation and the authority of the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) as the initial source, but encouraging the employment of personal judgement (*raʾy*) in the case of the absence of an explicit judgement from the sources.

Ghazālī does not deny the need for a teacher, let alone infallibility. However, he emphasises two things, the first is the need to take the method (i.e. intellectual demonstration) of the teacher, and not blindly follow his judgements. Second, in the case that the teacher should be followed without recourse to reason (*taqlīd*), he should be infallible, and he is the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) himself. Thus, there is no need for an infallible Imam after him. The knowledge received from the Prophet (ṣ)

is not direct, as in the case of being in the presence of one's teacher (or "Infallible Imam") or the companions in the presence of the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ), but it is known indirectly either through probable transmission (*al-āḥād*) or certain transmission (*mutawātir*).[15] Mitha further discusses this point, stating that:

> In a rather subtle manner, al-Ghazali reappropriates the conception of *taʾlīm*. In his version the infallible teacher is the Prophet and the scope of the knowledge involved is determined by the scope of what the Prophet has transmitted. Transmission becomes a key idea here, because even though al-Ghazali asserts that the content of what is transmitted by the Prophet is a truth that lies beyond reason, we, he argues, nonetheless make use of reason in distinguishing whether a transmission is *mutawātir* (impeccable or sufficiently recurrent), in which case the knowledge is certain (*yaqīn* or *qaṭʿī*), or whether it is *al-āḥād* (a solitary report/report of individuals) in which case the knowledge is conjectural (*ẓannī*). As such, al-Ghazālī is, ingeniously, able to re-define *taʾlīm* and at the same time continue affirming the validity of reason, and this moreover in a manner which, indirectly, places the *ʿulamāʾ* (hence al-Ghazālī himself) as guardians of this *taʾlīm*.[16]

The **first** and the **third proof** of the Bāṭinites are similar; both reject reason on the basis that disagreement or a multiplicity of opinions exist. Further, an adversary may argue that in contrast to intellectual cognitions, disagreements are not found in arithmetical cognitions because those are regarded as necessary. Ghazālī responds, stating that in actual fact there has been disagreement among the ancients in the arithmetical cognitions of astronomy. This occurs in the case of

> an increasing concatenation of the premises, the mind is too weak to retain them, and perhaps one slips from the mind and so it errs regarding the conclusion. But the possibility of that does not make us doubt the method.[17]

However, in the case of intellectual cognitions, errors are more frequent since the process is more veiled; whereas, in the case of arithmetical cognitions, it is clearer and therefore less disagreement occurs.[18] Thus, there is no difference between the two disciplines; both methods are necessary. Reason is not merely rejected on the basis that there are disagreements or contrary opinions. We do not throw out the method because of short-sightedness or vagueness of a matter. Ghazālī says that we do not "doubt about the arithmetical demonstrations, even though the dull-witted person does not understand."[19] He says that, in the case of a person who errs in his understanding of a conclusion, a systematic presentation of the premises should be made to him.[20] If he consents to the necessity of the premises, he would inevitably grasp the conclusion.[21] Ghazālī emphatically remarks that disagreement is not a result of the inadequacy of demonstrative reasoning but a shortfall in the ability of the person. In such a case, he employs the need to learn the method from a teacher, who learned it from a teacher or even discovered some of the methods by himself. He states that this chain of learning eventually ends with an infallible teacher, like a

prophet who received revelation from God. Here, Ghazālī does not make reference to Aristotle as the first teacher of logic, but to a prophet, most probably a reference to Abraham. This is consistent with his argument in the *The Straight Balance* (*al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*), whereby he shows the use of the syllogism in the Quran, through the example of the dialectical exchange between Abraham and Nimrod.

The Bāṭinites are not averse to the intellect on matters of necessary truth.[22] Thus, Ghazālī remarks that the denial of the intellect because of disagreement in speculative matters is no different from the denial of the intellect because the Sophists' intellect disagrees with the truth of necessary matters.[23] For Ghazālī, this is a blatant contradiction. The Bāṭinites reject demonstrative arguments due to the existence of disagreement, yet they accept necessary truths with the existence of disagreement. He implores them to be consistent, and reject necessary truths; otherwise, one has no right to reject the intellect of speculative matters.

Ghazālī continues his rebuttal of the "argument from disagreement," stating that a generalist approach is not suitable; the adversary should particularise the problem or question. He states that questions "are divided into what cannot be known by the reasoning of the intellect (*bi-naẓar al-ʿaql*), and what can be known with conjectural knowledge (*ʿilm ẓannī*), and what can be known with sure and certain knowledge (*ʿilm yaqīnī*)."[24] After understanding this division and the reality that knowledge is not homogeneous, a particular question that can be known with the intellect can be addressed. Thereafter, the failure of understanding can be resolved through the meticulous composition of the premises of a syllogism dealing with the question at hand. Ghazālī emphasises that of the knowledge that can be known through reason and established as certain, is the existence of a Necessary Being and the veracity of the Apostle of God, Muhammad (ṣ). Knowledge about God's attributes, the revealed laws, the Assembling on the Day of Judgement and the Resurrection are all known necessarily through uncritical acceptance (*taqlīd*) of the Apostle of God (via revelation and prophetic inspiration), not reason. Ghazālī concludes his rebuttal stating that the Prophet (ṣ) is infallible and confirmed by an apologetic miracle, unlike the "Infallible" Imam of the Bāṭinites. Ghazālī affirms a category of knowledge that is not known through the mind. The engagement in rationalising certain questions, such as the resurrection, inevitably leads to disagreement and false conclusions. This is consistent with *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-falāsifa*), whereby Ghazālī aims to vindicate the role of authority and not deny reason but limit the scope of reason.[25] He states that matters not known by the reach of the intellect can be rationally argued as possible, but it is to revelation that we are provided with the certainty of its actual occurrence or non-occurrence.

Ghazālī also addresses the assumption that "oneness is the indication of the truth, and multiplicity is the indication of the false." The first point he makes is that the Bāṭinites themselves have not agreed as to who the Infallible Imam is; they are not "free of blame." Further, he states that, if you disregard those who disagree as representatives of yourselves, and claim that no disagreement exists, he can just as well make the same argument and claim a united front and exclude parties that differ with him. Second, he argues that multiplicity is not necessarily a sign of the

false. He states that "for many a one is false and many a multiple is not devoid of the truth."[26] Finally, he takes the approach that his doctrine is one, and has no multiplicity. He states that "multiplicity is simply in the individuals who are united on the question, then divided on some questions."[27] He remarks that "the reasoning of the intellect is veritable" is a single doctrine and contains no multiplicity; it is other matters that invite disagreement. He continues, and states that they confuse the multiplicity of answers on one single question, with the case of a single question whereby a large group agrees but disagrees regarding other questions.[28] He states that no intelligent man will be deceived in this manner, but it is meant as a ruse to deceive the masses. He further argues that they take the Quranic verse "Had it been from other than God, they would surely have found much discrepancy therein (Q. 4:82)," and use it to deceive. However, it is in reference to a contradiction in the words of one individual, not to a multiplicity of opinion. He emphatically contends that if the proponents of reason agree on the *reasoning* of one proof, then disagreement among them is inconceivable.

Ghazālī's argument against the **fourth proof** involves taking the Bāṭinites' scepticism to its logical extreme.[29] Here, we see Ghazālī using sophistical scepticism in a methodological sense to undermine the scepticism of the Bāṭinites. Ghazālī states that surely you have often found yourself assuming your soul to be in another place, as you experience in a dream-like state but wake-up and realise the contrary. Thus, how are you certain that you are present in your current place? Perhaps you are sleeping? The Bāṭinite replies, stating that he knows by necessity the difference between the wakeful state and the dream-like state. To which Ghazālī responds that, in the same manner, he knows by necessity the difference between the error in his reasoning and the validity in his reasoning. Kukkonen remarks that:

> It is absurd to doubt just anything – for instance, the veracity of one's everyday opinion – or else one might as well start doubting absolutely everything. At least in this context, then, Ghazālī is unwilling to do so much as entertain the prospect of a universal scepticism. There are cures for this disease or that, but not to illness in general: similarly, one must specify a source of perplexity for the claim that one is perplexed (*mutaḥayyir*) to make sense and for a cure to be within reach. Otherwise, perplexity only provides an excuse for blind authoritarianism, which to Ghazālī bespeaks intellectual immaturity.[30]

Ghazālī emphatically rebukes the doubting of the veracity of demonstrative reason, sense perception or existence as being a slippery slope that could lead to a universal scepticism. It is by necessity that the difference between a state of error and a state of truth in reasoning is known. He states that invalidation of reason because of an error in reasoning, rather than realising that it's merely a premise that eluded one, opens a door of "pure sophistry, and that would lead to the invalidity of all knowledge and beliefs."[31]

In response to the **fifth proof** regarding the Bāṭinites' claim of being the saved sect, Ghazālī dismisses it firstly on the basis that it is not an authentic (*saḥīḥ*) hadith and that it is open to multiple ways of interpretation. Secondly, he argues that

he is closer to the way of the *ṣaḥāba* (companions), and like them (i.e. Muʾādh), he follows the Quran and Sunna, and if that is not possible, then he follows his personal judgement. Thus, the hadith is a reference to the salvation of those who exercise their reason, and not those who abandon it for an "Infallible" Imam. Further, he states that the *ṣaḥāba* followed the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ), who was confirmed by an evidentiary miracle, not an "Infallible" Imam who has no evidentiary miracle; and thus the Bāṭinites cannot claim to be on the path of the *ṣaḥāba*. Finally, Ghazālī remarks that people came into the fold of Islam through either unquestioning acceptance of their elders/teachers or rational acceptance. In both cases, their Islam was deemed acceptable. However, in the case of those who were critically minded or held doubts about Islam, the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) and his companions reasoned with them and provided proofs of the veracity of Islam.[32] Rational-minded persons would not just follow blindly, but would seek a rationalist response (or demonstrative proof) to their critical inquiry or doubts. Ghazālī shows that this was the way of the *ṣaḥāba* as opposed to the Bāṭinites' expectation that everyone should accept Islam on the basis of uncritical acceptance (*taqlīd*), let alone follow their "Infallible" Imam.

The Infamies is a thorough refutation in which Ghazālī counters the Bāṭinites' doctrine from various angles. In a generalist manner of responding to the Bāṭinites, he states that their claim of the falsity of reason is known by either necessity or reason itself.[33] In the former case, he argues that the Bāṭinites cannot claim necessity, for there is no disagreement in necessary knowledge. The self-evident truths such as "ten is more than three" and "one and the same thing cannot be both existent and non-existent" are accepted by all those with a sound mind, whereas their claim is not accepted by him and others. In the latter case, the Bāṭinites' use of reason to show the invalidity of reason is a contradiction. You cannot argue against reason using reason itself, for in doing so you are essentially affirming reason.

In response to a hypothetical question as to how Ghazālī might affirm reason himself, he does not take the circular approach of using reasoning to affirm reason; instead, he states that the affirmation of reason is in the instrumental value of its results (i.e. knowledge of the object of inquiry). Its validity is known through walking the path itself. To this point Ghazālī states:

> For we say that we know intellectual reasoning to be a guide to knowledge of the object of reasoning [intelligibles] by following the path of reasoning and arriving at it. So he who follows it, arrives; and he who arrives knows that what he followed is the way. But he who doubts before following should be told: The way to remove this doubt is to follow [the path].[34]

An obvious response to Ghazālī's approach is that after following the path, how do you know that what you have arrived at is actually knowledge rather than ignorance? Ghazālī's reply is that the knowledge acquired after the carefully arranged premises of a geometric proof is necessary; it cannot be doubted. In the same

manner, the meticulous arrangement of veritable premises in intellectual matters will provide an indubitable conclusion. It will be without doubt that the conclusion is in actual fact knowledge. Ghazālī again, in his typically thorough fashion, provides a geometric and a metaphysical example to prove his point. In the case of the former, he draws on Euclidean geometry. In the case of the latter, he presents an elaborate syllogism to prove that a Necessary Being exists. He states that the knowledge of this reality is known necessarily, devoid of doubt. Thus, it is by walking the path itself that we affirm the veracity of reasoning.

In many locations in *The Infamies*, Ghazālī provides an outline of a syllogism and discusses its components. He states that the Bāṭinites themselves use such reasoning in the presentation of their doctrine, yet they reject it. It thus shows their lack of knowledge of what exactly a syllogism is. Compelled to educate them, Ghazālī remarks that every syllogism is comprised of two premises. These premises may either be categorical (*ḥamliyya*) or conditional (*sharṭiyya*). He states that the categorical premises are shown in the following syllogism:[35]

> The world is incipient [first premise].
> Every incipient has a cause [second premise].
> Therefore, the world has a cause [conclusion].

Thereafter, he shows a syllogism which contains conditional premises:[36]

> If it is certain that the beginnings (*ḥawādith*) of the world has a cause, the postulated cause is either incipient (*ḥādith*) or eternal [first premise].
> If it is false that it is incipient, it is certain that it is eternal [second premise].
> The existence of the world has an eternal cause [conclusion].

In this manner, Ghazālī outlines the nature of a syllogism in *The Infamies*, not to mention his "rational" argument for its validity. It is, as we shall show later, in *The Straight Balance* (al-*Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*) that he presents to his Bāṭinite interlocutor the different types of syllogisms and provides a Quranic justification for them. Josef Van Ess states,

> It is Ghazālī who, for the first time, imperatively stressed the epistemological problem: nobody needs *taʾlīm*, instruction by an Imam, because speculation can be safely conducted to an undoubtable result. One must only use an infallible method, and this infallible method is Aristotelian logic.[37]

The theme of *taqlīd*, as it does in many of Ghazālī's works, again presents itself in *The Infamies*. However, his purpose in *The Infamies* is to associate an irrational *taqlīd* (i.e. blind conformism) with the *taʾlīm* of an Imam, and a rational *taqlīd* with an epistemology that accepts the *taʾlīm* of the Prophet (ṣ) and the use of reason.[38] Thus, a rational *taqlīd*, *rationally* embraces the higher epistemic authority of the Prophet (ṣ), and recognises the place of human reason to attain certainty in matters that fall out of the scope of what can be attained through transmission (*naql*).

According to Marshal Hodgson, Ghazālī adapted and appropriated the *taʾlīm* doctrine and placed it within a Sunni framework.[39] Farouk Mitha comments on this, stating that the flowering of this adaptation can be seen in *The Straight Balance* and *The Deliverance from Error.* He says that

> whereas the *taʾlīm* doctrine places sole emphasis on the authority of a living teacher, Ghazālī sought to connect the Prophet's *taʾlīm* with that of a living, historical community, so that the cumulative experience of the Sunni community becomes the repository and continuing guarantor of truth for every individual believer.[40]

The Infamies shows Ghazālī's in-depth acquaintance with not only Bāṭinite scepticism but that of the sophists (*sūfasṭāʾiyya*) too. It is worth noting that the methodological scepticism Ghazālī applied in *The Deliverance* is unquestionably influenced by his engagement with the Bāṭinites. Frank Griffel states: "There is no question that al-Ghazālī's intellectual formation and his thorough approach towards questions of epistemology is partly a result of his confrontation with the Ismāʿīli *dāʿīs.*"[41] *The Infamies* makes clear Ghazālī's integrative approach: on the one hand, he avoids the excesses of a rejection of reason, and on the other hand, the overreliance on reason.[42] Instead he takes a moderate stance, placing certainty at the nexus of both reason and authority.

Ghazālī's hermeneutical theory *(*taʾwīl*) in* The Infamies[43]

The Bāṭinites reject the literal meaning of revelation (Quran) and the prophetic traditions (Sunna). They claim that through the Imam they come to know the real nature of things and obtain esoteric knowledge of the texts.[44] They regard the literal meaning as a form of bondage. As a result, they forgo the legal injunctions of the texts. In addition, they deny the explicit Quranic description of realities, the incipient nature of the world, the resurrection of the physical body, the assembling, and realities of the hereafter, such as paradise and hellfire.[45]

Ghazālī's Sufi hermeneutic accepts both the literal (*ẓāhir*) meaning and the reality of an inner (*bāṭin*) meaning.[46] The arrival at an inner meaning of a text does not contradict or deny the literal meaning.[47] They are in harmony with one another.[48] However, Ghazālī has another hermeneutical model whereby the outward (*ẓāhir*) and the inward (*bāṭin*) meanings are sometimes in opposition. It is only in the case of the rational impossibility of the literal meaning that he departs from it, and is compelled to turn to a metaphorical interpretation (*taʾwīl*).[49] It is the latter approach that he presents in *The Infamies*.

Ghazālī states that for the Bāṭinites, impossibility is established because of an absence of observation, not through a rational proof of its impossibility.[50] Thus, belief as to explicit realities stated in the Quran, such as the bodily resurrection, is rejected. However, rationally speaking, it is not impossible. Ghazālī marvels at his adversaries' narrow outlook, for how can they deny God's power on the basis of their limited observation? Since some realities are not impossible to the intellect,

and one could argue, neither are they necessary, it is therefore imperative to submit to the literal understanding of revelation. Ghazālī gives a concrete example from the Quran, and provides his commentary on it to make his point:

> In general, the utterance of God Most High has indeed embraced the stages and ranks of creation: "We created man from a draught of clay. Then We made him a drop in a secure dwelling place. Then of the drop We created a blood clot, then of the blood clot We created a lump of flesh, then of the lump of flesh We created bones and We clothed the bones with flesh; then we brought him into being as another creation. Blessed is God, the best of creators! Then indeed you shall die thereafter. Then surely you shall be raised up on the day of Resurrection."[51] Thus, He encompassed creatures with belief by the totality of the premises, except for raising, because they had seen all that except raising. Had they never seen a death, they would have denied the possibility of death. And had they not seen the creation of man from sperm they would have denied its possibility. So the raising is in unison with what is prior to it in the balance of the intellect: let us, therefore, believe the Prophets regarding what they brought, for it is not impossible.[52]

This discussion follows with Ghazālī's justification for the application of figurative interpretation (*taʾwīl*) regarding the verse of God "mounting the throne,"[53] or the tradition regarding "the descent of God."[54] He states that he has a methodology to his interpretation; it is not arbitrary. In this case, reason shows the impossibility of "God's mounting or descending," for he is not subject to the qualities of created beings. Thus, what is intended is not the literal meaning but a metaphorical meaning such as "dominion." However, figurative interpretation in the case of the resurrection, or the realities of the hereafter such as the hellfire and paradise, amounts to a lie of the message of the Prophet (ṣ).[55]

In *The Decisive Criterion for Distinguishing Islam from Masked Infidelity* (*Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayna al-islām wa-l-zandaqa*), Ghazālī expounds on his hermeneutical theory in a more elaborate manner. He discusses the various levels of existence which relate to the various levels of interpretation. Ghazālī informs us of five levels of existence: the ontological (*dhāti*), the sensory (*ḥissī*), the conceptual (*khayāli*), the noetic (*ʿaqlī*), and the analogous (*shabahī*).[56] Ghazālī states that "No one who acknowledges the existence of what the Prophet (ṣ) informed us of *on any of these five levels* can be said to be categorically deeming what the Prophet (ṣ) taught to be a lie."[57] The first level, ontological existence, is concrete existence. It is external to the senses, imagination or the mind. In understanding texts, it represents the outward meaning (*ẓāhir*) of a text. Figurative interpretation is not applied to it. Ghazālī states that an example of it is the Prophet (ṣ) informing us of the footstool (*kursī*) or the seven heavens. He remarks that they exist in their own right, independent of whether we perceive it or not. They are understood in their apparent meaning, and not interpreted figuratively. Ghazālī's Rule of Figurative Interpretation (*Qānūn al-taʾwīl*) states that if the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*) is logically impossible, then one should move to the next level, sensory

existence (*ḥissī*). If, however, this too is deemed as logically impossible, one should move to the next level, conceptual existence, noetic existence or finally analogous existence.[58]

To provide an example, when the Prophet (ṣ) said: "God fermented the clay of Adam in His hand for forty mornings," Ghazālī remarks that it is logically impossible to attribute to God a physical hand. Thus, it cannot be interpreted on the apparent, the sensory or the imaginative level, but understood as a noetic (*ʿaqlī*) hand. An immaterial or functional understanding of the "hand" "is represented in that by which one seizes and strikes, does, gives and withholds things" or "to refer to one of God's attributes such as power or some other attribute."[59] To cite an example of analogous existence, Ghazālī states that it is "logically impossible for God to experience anger, so defined, as an ontological, sensorial, conceptual, or noetic reality."[60] Instead, it refers to an attribute such as "the will to punish" or the "infliction of pain," which yields the same result as anger.[61] Ghazālī remarks in *The Infamies*:

> The expressions which have been revealed on the Assembly, Resurrection, Garden and Fire are explicit, without any figurative interpretation (*taʾwīl*) or way of turning except neutralising and denial; but the expressions on "mounting the throne" (*istiwāʾ*) and the form (*al-ṣūrā*) etc., are allusions and verbal extensions which admit figurative interpretation (*taʾwīl*) in the description of God. The other is that rational demonstrations repel belief in anthropomorphism, "descent," "motion," and "occupying a place" by a proving which cannot be doubted; but no rational proof precludes the possibility of what is promised in the after-life regarding the Garden and the Fire; on the contrary, the eternal power comprehends them and they are things possible in themselves, and the eternal power is not incapable of what is possible – how, then, can this be likened to what concerns God's attributes?!"[62]

The process of syllogistic reasoning is thus closely related to *taʾwīl*. It is only after a demonstrative proof (*burhān*) of the impossibility of the literal understanding (or previous level of interpretation), that a figurative interpretation (or the next level of interpretation) of the text is applied.[63] Thus, syllogistic logic is the criterion to apply *taʾwīl*.[64] In Ghazālī's hermeneutical theory, the attainment of certainty in the understanding of texts is not left to a subjectivist interpretation but rather to a strict methodology. It is primarily objectivist, with a strict reliance on syllogistic reasoning, ruling out any subjectivist interpretation.[65] It is not just in *The Infamies* that we see his hermeneutical strategy, but more apparently, we see it applied in *The Incoherence* (discussed in the next chapter). The interpretation of the Quran is restricted to those who have attained a mastery in syllogistic reasoning. Thus, in a more detailed fashion than *The Infamies* and a more accessible fashion than his other logical works, *The Straight Balance* (*al-Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*) discusses the nature, origins and various types of syllogisms (scales). Ghazālī thus remarks in *The Decisive Criterion* (*Fayṣal al-tafriqa*) that, "Indeed, everyone who understands these scales acknowledges them to be an absolute means to certainty."[66]

Quranic support for philosophical demonstration in *The Straight Balance*

In *The Straight Balance*, Ghazālī shows the presence of syllogistic reasoning in the Quran, and thus attempts to provide legitimacy for the application of logic in the Islamic tradition. The text is written as a dialectical engagement between himself and his interlocutor, a Bāṭinite. The text is a complementary work to *The Infamies* (and *The Deliverance*), in that it continues his rebuttal of Bāṭinite doctrine but provides a robust primer of syllogistic reason and its origins in the Quran. He states in *The Deliverance* that it is a work of five scales for weighing knowledge, that if understood will eliminate the "need" for an Infallible Imam.[67]

The opening of the text begins with his interlocutor asking if true knowledge is perceived through independent judgement (*raʾy*) and analogy (*qiyās*), or authoritative instruction (*taʿlīm*). Ghazālī responds, surprisingly, stating that *neither* provides certain knowledge. It becomes apparent at this stage that Ghazālī's purpose in *The Straight Balance* is not just a response to Bāṭinite doctrine but is intended to address the inadequacy of the rational instruments of the *kalām* tradition as well.[68] Thus, *The Straight Balance* attempts to give Quranic legitimacy for the application of syllogistic reason in the discipline of *kalām*. Ghazālī's gripe with the *kalām* discipline was its dependence on dialectical reasoning (*jadal*), and not the indubitable method of philosophical demonstration (*burhān*). The dialectical approach relied on premises that were generally accepted opinions from adversaries, derived from the Quran and prophetic traditions, community consensus or uncritical acceptance instead of the indubitable premises that are used in a demonstrative syllogism.[69] In *The Deliverance*, he states that these are of "little use in the case of one who admits nothing at all except the primary and self-evident truths."[70] Towards the end of *The Straight Balance* he makes this clear, stating:

> The *mutakallimūn* [theologians] have acted rashly and their contention has multiplied, since they held fast to *raʾy* and *qiyās*. But that does not give serene certainty: rather it is suitable for legal, conjectural analogies and for inclining men's hearts in the direction of the right and the true.[71]

He further clarifies that his intention is not just to address Bāṭinite doctrine, urging others to: "Find profit in the contents of these conversations by the comprehension of things more sublime than the correction of the doctrine of the devotees of *taʿlīm*."[72] Thus, we note that Ghazālī's chief concern in *The Straight Balance* is to convince the *mutakallimūn* (theologians) of the Quranic legitimacy of syllogistic reasoning and its efficacy in attaining certainty as to the true nature of things (*ḥaqāʾiq al-ashyāʾ*).[73]

Instead of *taʿlīm*, or even *raʾy* and *qiyās*, he states that knowledge should be weighed with "the straight balance." Here, Ghazālī uses the metaphor of a "straight scale" to represent a demonstrative syllogism. He regards a syllogism as a means of weighing the truth or falsehood of propositions. This is a clear reference to the Quranic verse "and weigh with the straight balance (Q. 17:34)." Ghazālī most probably used the metaphor of a scale to shift the association of logic (*manṭiq*)

from Greek logic. Thus, for him, logic is not viewed as a foreign discipline but as something that can be used as a tool in *kalām*.[74] According to Whittingham, this already began to take place with Ibn Sina and his usage of terms such as *tarāz* (scales), *miʿyār* (gauge), *mikyāl* (measure), and *mizān* (balance) in his works of logic.[75]

Before showing the existence of syllogisms in the Quran, Ghazālī provides Quranic verses that implicitly endorse the use of syllogistic reasoning. Ghazālī refers to the verse "Call unto the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation. And dispute with them in the most virtuous manner (Q. 16:125)." In Ghazālī's interpretation of this verse, we see his pedagogical approach in dealing with the "problem" of disagreement.[76] He encourages using a method suitable to the appropriate audience. He states that the above verse appeals to three types of callings (*daʿwa*): wisdom (*al-ḥikma*, i.e. philosophical demonstration), preaching (*al-mawʿiza*), and dialectics (*al-mujādala*).[77] He states that the "straight scale" or philosophical logic should be taught to, or used with, men of insight, that is, the elite (*al-khawāṣ*), who are possessed with natural intelligence, are free of blind conformism (*taqlīd*), and are receptive to being taught the "straight scale."[78] However, preaching (*al-mawʿiza*) should be used with the commoners (*al-ʿawām*), and dialectics (*al-mujādala*) with the contentious debaters (*ahl al-jadal wa al-shaghab*). Thus, he justifies that syllogistic reasoning is a method of summoning to God when engaging with men of insight (*al-khawāṣ*). Thus, Ghazālī states:

> This, then, is my procedure in summoning men to the truth and bringing them forth from the darkness of error to the light of the truth. And that is that I summon the elite by wisdom, viz. by teaching the balance [the scale] […]And were it not for the Quran's containing the balances it would not be correct to call the Quran "Light." For light is not seen in itself but by it other things are seen, and this is the quality of the balance […] This, then, is the sure and certain knowledge by which the possessors of intelligence and men of insight are convinced, and they are in no wise convinced by anything else.[79]

In addition, Ghazālī makes reference to the following verses: "Heaven He has raised and the Balance He has set, that you transgress not in the balance. So set right the weight and fall not short in the balance (Q. 55:7–9)." Also, "We have indeed sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and We sent down the Book and the Balance with them, that the people would uphold justice (Q. 57:25)." He emphatically remarks that the Balance does not refer to the weighing of barley or wheat, but is applied to the attainment of sure knowledge of God, His angels, His scriptures, His Prophets, and the phenomenal (*mulk*) and spiritual (*malakūt*) worlds.[80] In these verses, Ghazālī associates the term "Balance" with the endorsement of syllogistic logic. We now turn to his legitimisation of syllogistic logic through him showing the Quran's usage of it.

Ghazālī shows five balances that are present in the Quran. The balance of equivalence consists of three balances: the greater, the middle and the lesser.

McCarthy notes that the balance of equivalence (*mīzān al-taʿādul*) corresponds with the categorical syllogisms found in Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*.[81] The greater balance (*al-mīzān al-akbar*) is the first figure; the middle balance (*al-mīzān al-awsaṭ*) is the second figure; and the lesser balance (*al-mīzān al-aṣghar*) is the third figure.[82] The balance of concomitance (*al-mīzān al-talāzum*) and the balance of opposition (*mīzān al-taʿānud*) correspond with the connective conditional syllogism and the separative conditional syllogism respectively, found in Stoic logic. To prevent an aversion to the "medicine," Ghazālī states explicitly that he uses these names to disguise that its origin is from traditional logic (*manṭiq*), and thus it makes accepting it more palatable.[83]

In chapter 2 of *The Straight Balance*, the greater balance of equivalence is presented. The context in the Quran is a dispute between Nimrod and Abraham, in which Nimrod claims divinity. The Quran states:

> Hast thou not considered him who disputed with Abraham about his Lord because God had given him sovereignty? When Abraham said, "My Lord gives life and causes death," he said, "I give life and cause death." Abraham said, "Truly God brings the sun from the east. Bring it, then, from the west." Thus was he who disbelieved confounded. And God guides not wrongdoing people. (Q. 2:258)

Ghazālī shows that Abraham's response to Nimrod can be seen in the following two syllogisms:

> Whoever can make the sun rise is God [major premise].
> But my God can make the sun rise [minor premise].
> [Therefore] my God is God – and not you, Nimrod.[84]

The second syllogism is the following:

> My Lord is the one who makes the sun rise [minor premise].
> And the one who makes the sun rise is a God [major premise].
> So it follows from it that my Lord is a God.[85]

The above two syllogisms are first figures of the categorical syllogism. McCarthy recognises the first syllogism as a DARII.[86] This takes the form "all M is P; some S is M, therefore, some S is P." McCarthy states that the second syllogism seems to violate a principle of Aristotle's first figure. However, it does not seem to be the case that Ghazālī is violating any principle, but merely that he interchanges the order of the minor and the major premise. Otherwise, the second syllogism also seems to be a DARII.[87] Ghazālī summarises this logical principle, stating "that the judgement applying to the more general is a judgement applying to the more particular."[88]

In chapter 3, the middle balance of equivalence is presented, which takes the form of a second figure syllogism. Ghazālī presents three syllogisms, and the first

shows Abraham's contemplation that the moon is not divine. The syllogism is linked to the Quranic verse which states, "I love not things that set (Q. 6:76)," and the following verse, "When he saw the moon rising he said, 'this is my Lord!' But when it set, he said, 'If my Lord does not guide me, I shall surely be among the people who are astray (Q. 6:77).'" Ghazālī converts this into the following syllogism:

> The moon is a thing which sets [major premise].
> But God is not a thing which sets [minor premise].
> Therefore, the moon is not a God.[89]

The above syllogism is of the mood CESARE.[90] This takes the form "No P is M; all S is M; therefore no S is P." He also builds a FESTINO:[91]

> Sons (of God) are not chastised (by God) [major premise].
> But you are chastised (by God) [minor premise].
> Therefore, you are not sons (of God).[92]

This takes the form "No P is M, and some S are M, thus some S are not P." This syllogism is formed from the Quranic verse which states, "And the Jews and the Christians say, 'We are the children of God and his beloved ones.' Say: 'Why then does he punish you for your sins?' Nay, but you are mortals of His creating (Q. 5:18)." Here we see the Quran guiding the Prophet (ṣ) how to reason with the Jews and Christians. Ibn ʿAbbās states that the context of this verse was in the case of a group of Madinan Jews who rejected the Prophet's calling to Islam, because of their claim to being "the children of God," and thus need not fear.[93] However, the Quran is reminding the Christians and Jews that they are mortals, and potentially subject to punishment for their sins (as they themselves claim).[94] In the same chapter, Ghazālī provides a third, second figure syllogism:

> Every friend desires to meet his friend [major premise].
> But the Jew does not desire to meet God [minor premise].
> Therefore, he is not the friend of God.[95]

It follows the mood CAMESTRES which takes the form "All P is M, no S is M, therefore, no S is P."[96] The syllogism was formed from the verse

> Say, "O you who are Jews! If you claim that you are friends unto God apart from [other] people, then long for death, if you are truthful." But they will never long for it due to that which their hands have sent forth. And God knows the wrongdoers. (Q. 62:6–7)

Ghazālī states that the general logical principle for the middle balance of equivalence is "that any two things, one of which is qualified by a quality which is denied of the other, are different."[97]

In chapter 4, the lesser balance of equivalence is presented; this takes the form of a third figure syllogism. Ghazālī defines the logical principle of the third figure, stating that:

> when any two qualities concur in one and the same thing, then some aspect of one of the two qualities must of necessity be qualified by another, but it does not necessarily follow that all of it be qualified by it.

The Quran states, "They did not measure God with His true measure when they said, 'God has not sent down aught to any human being.' Say, 'Who sent down the Book that Moses brought as a light and a guidance for mankind' (Q. 6: 91)." Thus, by this logic, Ghazālī states that the Quran refutes the claim that no Book was sent down to mankind.[98] He converts this into a DARAPTI, taking the form "All M is P, all M is S, and therefore, some S is P":[99]

> Moses is a man [minor premise].
> Moses is one upon whom the Scripture was sent down [major premise].
> Some man has had sent down upon him the Book (Scripture).[100]

In chapter 5, the balance of concomitance (*al-mīzān al-talāzum*) is presented. This corresponds to what is called a connective conditional syllogism. Ghazālī states that the logical principle is that "everything which is a necessary concomitant (*lāzim*) of a thing follows it in every circumstance."[101] The syllogism is a *modus tollens*[102] ("denying the consequent"), which takes the form "If A, then B but not A therefore not B." The presence of the syllogism is the Quranic verse "If there had been in the heavens or earth any gods but Him, both heavens and earth would be ruined (Q. 21:22)."[103] Ghazālī presents the syllogism in the following form:

> If the world has two gods, heaven and earth would have gone to ruin [first premise].
> But it is a known fact that they have not gone to ruin [second premise].
> So there follows from these two a necessary condition, viz. the denial of the two gods.[104]

In chapter 6, Ghazālī presents a separative conditional syllogism which he calls the balance of opposition (*mīzān al-ta ʿānud*). He states that the logical principle of it is that "when anything is limited to two divisions the existence of one of them entails the denial of the other."[105] The syllogism is a *modus tollendo ponens* ("the mode that affirms by denying"), which takes the form "either A or B, but not A, therefore, B." The presence of this syllogism is in the Quranic verse "Say, 'Who provides for you from the heavens and the earth?' Say, 'God. And surely either we or you are upon guidance or in manifest error (Q. 34:24).'" From this verse, Ghazālī builds the following syllogism:

> We or you are in manifest error [first premise].

But it is known that We are not in error [second premise].

So there follows from their coupling a necessary conclusion, viz. that you are in error.[106]

Ghazālī claims originality in identifying these syllogisms in the Quran. However, he states that he was not the first to deduce its principles. He does not give explicit acknowledgement to the Greeks or Ibn Sina, but reaches back to before their arrival, stating that the men who derived the principles took them from the books of Abraham and Moses.[107] In a succinct form, parts of the subsequent chapters in *The Straight Balance* repeat many of the arguments present in *The Infamies*, focusing on undermining the *taʾlīm* doctrine of the Bāṭinites, affirming the authoritative instruction of the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) and showing the validity of reason and the certainty of knowledge attained through the demonstrative syllogism.

Besides the probable certainty attained from *raʾy* and *qiyās*, Ghazālī regards the reports of evidentiary miracles as open to ambiguity.[108] Instead, the best means of attaining the veracity of Muhammad (ṣ) is through the certainty attained via syllogistic reasoning (balances). He states that it is through the book itself that he learnt the balances, through which he could weigh his cognitions about God and the realities of the afterlife.[109] Thus, he came to realise the conformity between his cognitions, and the Quran and the prophetic traditions, and subsequently the veracity of his knowledge of the Prophet (ṣ). Hence, the knowledge of prophecy is known necessarily and with indubitable certainty.[110]

In *The Straight Balance*, Ghazālī shows the harmony between demonstrative logic and revelation, arguing that there is no contradiction between the two sources of knowledge.[111] The affirmation of philosophical logic is from a divine source itself, revelation. Ghazālī has shown that through revelation's usage of syllogistic reasoning, revelation endorses reason. Furthermore, he states that the data obtained from revelation is consistent with the conclusions obtained through reason; there are no contradictions.[112] López-Farjeat states that "there can be no contradiction because both the principles of knowledge and revelation proceed from the same source, namely, God."[113] Similarly, just as we have shown in the preceding chapter that necessary truths are from a divine source, logical reasoning too is from (affirmed by) a divine source, in this case, revelation.[114] The certainty obtained from logical proof (*burhān*) is not in contradistinction to revelation, but is supported by it. Thus, Ghazālī implores the *mutakallimūn* to introduce it in their discipline and berates the Ismāʿīlī Shiʿī's rejection of it.

The usage of dialectical reasoning by the *mutakallimūn* was meant to refute heretical doctrine and defend the faith. However, it did not provide the certainty of demonstrative reasoning. For Ghazālī, the introduction of demonstrative reasoning in the *kalām* tradition is a means of not just polemical engagement but also of knowing the true reality of things (*ḥaqāʾiq al-ashyāʾ*). Through both, revelation and demonstrative reasoning, knowledge of the reality of things can be achieved. Although revelation is above reason, and reason has inherent limitations, syllogistic reasoning is veritable and provides certain knowledge. Revelation has included

syllogistic reasoning, and both are from the same source. Thus, they do not contradict each other, and lead to the same conclusions.

Ghazālī unambiguously shows the superiority of philosophical reasoning (*burhān*) relative to the other methods of attaining *acquired* knowledge. In Ghazālī's epistemology, as shown in the previous chapter, he divides knowledge into that which is acquired and that which is direct (spiritual unveiling). It is important to note the context of *The Straight Balance*. It is a polemical work meant to affirm the validity and superiority of demonstrative reason (*burhān*) relative to the authoritative instruction (*taʾlīm*) of the Bāṭinites, and the rational instruments (*raʾy* and *qiyās*) of the *mutakallimūn*.

In reading *The Straight Balance*, López-Farjeat argues that Ghazālī "conceives that intellectual knowledge is the best way to know God," relative to mystical experience.[115] Through placing emphasis on the intellectual way, López-Farjeat gives mystical cognition a secondary importance in Ghazālī's epistemology. He sees it as solely spiritual practice meant to attain salvation and not a higher level of certainty or illumination.[116] It is important to make the distinction that philosophical demonstration provides a certainty of an objective quality, whereas spiritual unveiling (*mukāshafa*) is an experiential and subjective type of certainty. The latter is a different quality which incorporates spiritual praxis or striving (*mujāhada*). Ghazālī does not undermine philosophical reasoning; he is in actual fact an advocate of it as we've shown in *The Straight Balance* and *The Infamies*. However, he recognises its epistemic limitations relative to revelation and its epistemic quality relative to spiritual unveiling. A holistic understanding of Ghazālī's epistemology considers his entire oeuvre, both his philosophical and his Sufi works. There is not necessarily a tension between the methods of the Sufis and that of the philosophers; however, it is preferable to see their relationship as part of a holistic epistemology which recognises the rightful place of each.

In a series of syllogisms, Ghazālī states that if the working of the world and the composition of man is well ordered and marvellous, then God is knowing, and if He is knowing, it follows that He is living. Hence, if He is knowing and living, it follows that He is subsisting in Himself.[117] Following this, Ghazālī makes an interesting remark regarding the syllogism as a means to spiritual ascent:

> Thus, then, we ascend from the quality of the composition of man to the attribute of his Maker, viz. knowledge; then we ascend from knowledge to life, then from it to the essence. This is the spiritual ascension, and these balances are the steps of the ascension to heaven, or rather to the Creator of heaven, and these principles are the steps of the stairs.[118]

Here he implies that philosophical logic is a crucial step in the path to spiritual ascent, and eventual knowledge of God. Rational and experiential knowledge are not mutually exclusive paths, but the former is a crucial prior component of the latter. He is essentially saying that intellectual knowledge of God is a "prerequisite" to spiritual ascent. It is not through philosophical logic *alone* that we attain the fullest knowledge of God. In *The Deliverance from Error*, Ghazālī clearly states that:

> I knew with certainty that the Sufis were masters of states, not purveyors of words, and that I had learned all I could by way of theory. There remained, then, only what was attainable, not by *hearing and study*, but by fruitional experience and actually engaging in the way.[119]

In response to these two passages from *The Straight Balance* and *The Deliverance*, Whittingham pertinently states that,

> perhaps one way out of this apparent contradiction is to regard logic as the attendant who leads us to the door of the king's throne. Logic yields a form of certain knowledge, which helps us to receive what can only ultimately be received by experience.[120]

Moreover, it is from texts such as *The Scale of Action* (*Mizān al-ʿamal*) and *The Marvels of the Heart* (*Kitāb sharḥ ʿajaʾib al-qalb*), the 21st book of *The Revival*, that we may glean further insight. In a clear manner, Ghazālī makes this point in *The Marvels of the Heart*:

> Many a Sufi has travelled this way and still has continued to hold a certain fancy for twenty years, whereas if he had to study science thoroughly beforehand, the point of confusion in his fancy (*khayāl*) would have been open up to him at once. So to busy oneself in the path of learning is a *surer and easier* means of attaining the aim. They claim that it is as though a man left off the study of jurisprudence, asserting: "The Prophet did not study it, and he became one who studied the divine law by means of prophetic and general inspiration without any repetition or application, and perhaps discipline of the soul and steadfastness will bring me finally to that goal."[121]

Furthermore, in *The Scale of Action,* he states:

> [However], if the soul is not trained to the true sciences, it will be ensnared by distracting imaginary thoughts (*khātir*) which it mistakenly deems to be realities descending upon the soul. How many a Sufi struggles for ten years to rid himself of one distracting imaginary thought. Had he mastered the true sciences first, he could easily have removed his stray imaginary thoughts. Thus, attainment of knowledge of sciences by studying the *Criterion of Knowledge* (*Miʿyār al-ʿilm*),[122] and attaining the proofs of detailed sciences (*barāhīn al-ʿulūm al-mufaṣṣalah*) is to be given priority, as it will definitely lead to the desired goal just as perseverance and assiduousness leads to the knowledge of the soul. The purpose of these discursive sciences is to find a reliable means of using personal intellectual effort (*ijtihād*) to attain knowledge of the soul [*fiqh al-nafs*]. The Prophet (ṣ) was already knowledgeable about the soul [*faqih al-nafs*], so did not require such intellectual effort. But the disciple (*murīd*) cannot expect to attain the Prophet's rank of knowledge of the soul, just by the refinement of the soul (*riyāḍat al-nafs*): Discipleship requires striving for the true sciences so his

expectation would not be far-fetched. He must obtain the true sciences of the soul through research and observation, which is possible through studying what earlier scholars have left behind. Having done that, there will be no harm if we wait in anticipation for the divine matters; not hitherto revealed to scholars. After all, the divine matters that still need to be discovered are far more than what man has discovered.[123]

Commenting on this passage from *The Scale of Action*, Ebrahim Moosa states:

> Ghazālī hastened to add that anyone other than a prophet who wishes to attain such a level of self-intelligibility by exclusively relying on the help of ascetic practices is actually being overambitious. Ascetic practices are necessary, but these must, as a matter of necessity, be coupled with discursive knowledge based on investigation and inquiry.[124]

In the passages drawn from *The Straight Balance, The Scale of Action* and *The Marvels of the Heart*, we see Ghazālī's hybrid approach, integrating both philosophical logic and ascetic practice. Indeed, as *The Deliverance* shows, mystical cognition is regarded as a superior quality of certainty. However, Ghazālī emphasises the importance of prior training in the rational sciences, lest the seeker confuse wandering imaginary thoughts (*khayāl*) with reality. Ghazālī makes it clear that prior to ascetic practice, intellectual effort (*ijtihād*) to attain self-knowledge is necessary, for we are not like the Prophet (ṣ) who already had knowledge of the self (*nafs*). Syllogistic reasoning is seen as a step along the path to spiritual ascension. After the mastery of syllogistic reasoning, the Sufi path of spiritual refinement should be pursued to attain greater mystical insights. Ghazālī does not reject the potential of success in solely performing spiritual practices; however, he states that as a prerequisite "the path of learning is a *surer and easier* means of attaining the aim."[125] Thus, the certainty attained from philosophical reasoning expedites the process of attaining the fullest knowledge of God through spiritual experience (*dhawq*).

Conclusion

Ghazālī uses the Quranic metaphor of a "straight balance" to build palatable neologisms of the demonstrative syllogisms. He meticulously outlines from the Quran the presence of the three syllogistic figures in Aristotelian logic, but also the connective and separative conditional syllogism in Stoic logic. He thus states that "this, then, is the sure and certain knowledge by which the possessors of intelligence and men of insight are convinced, and they are in no wise convinced by anything else."[126] In *The Straight Balance*, we see a harmony between demonstrative logic and revelation, with neither source of knowledge contradicting one another, for both are ultimately from a divine source.

A central concern of Ghazālī is the Bāṭinites' arbitrary esoteric reading of scripture and rejection of its literal understanding. In his hermeneutical theory, an

absolute means to certainty is through a mastery of syllogistic reasoning. It is only after a demonstrative proof (*burhān*) of the impossibility of a literal understanding of a text that figurative interpretation (*taʾwīl*) can be applied; otherwise, the literal understanding is the default mode of understanding. In his Sufi works, insight may be gleaned into his other hermeneutical model, whereby both the literal and esoteric meanings can be grasped concurrently.

The Straight Balance, alongside other works, allows us insight into Ghazālī's hybrid approach, integrating both philosophical reason and the Sufi path. He implores the prerequisite training in the rational sciences prior to ascetic practices. Hence, through the certainty attained from discursive knowledge, the Sufi path of spiritual praxis is expedited and the fullest knowledge of God may be experienced. Thus, for Ghazālī, syllogistic reasoning is seen as *prior* steps along the ladder of spiritual ascension to God.

In a robust manner, Ghazālī provides support for the veracity of reason in the *The Infamies,* and shows, in *The Straight Balance*, the presence of syllogistic reasoning in the Quran. *The Straight Balance* and *The Infamies* show Ghazālī's moderate stance, placing certainty at the nexus of both reason and authority. Ghazālī's integrative approach gives reason its rightful place as a means to the attainment of certainty; however, he respects the authoritative instruction of the Prophet (ṣ) and the divine place of revelation. Ghazālī thus shows the superiority of philosophical logic in attaining certainty, as opposed to other methods of attaining *acquired* knowledge. In doing so, he berates the *taʾlīm* of the Bāṭinites and the inferior rational instruments of the *mutakallimūn*. In the words of Afifi al-Akiti, "Al-Ghazālī made the art of *burhān* acceptable in the *Weltanschauung* of Islam's religious scholars."[127] In the sphere of objective knowledge, philosophical demonstration provides the highest level of certainty. However, it is from Ghazālī's other works (see Chapter 4, this volume) that we obtain a holistic understanding of his epistemology and see the place given to other avenues of knowledge, of the subjective or experiential sort, such as spiritual unveiling (*mukāshafa*).

In this chapter we've shown Ghazālī's polemical engagement with the Ismāʿīlī Bāṭinites and his defence of the prominent place of reason. In the chapter to follow, we demonstrate Ghazālī's defence of the epistemic authority of revelation, and discuss his attempt to humble the philosophers and show the limitations of reason.

Notes

1 Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam,* Vol. 2, 183.
2 Other appellations used are *al-Qarāmiṭa, al-Qarmaṭiyya, al-Khurramiyya, al-Kurramdīniyya, al-Ismāʿīliyya, al-Sabʿiyya, al-Bābakiyya, al-Muḥammara,* and *al-Taʿlīmiyya.*
3 Al-Ghazālī, *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya*, 11.
4 Ibid., 11–12.
5 Ibid., 17.
6 The term "prospect" refers to those whom the Bāṭinites attempt to convert to their religious convictions through proselytisation.
7 Al-Ghazālī, *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya*, 25.

8 These theological doctrines include the denial of the resurrection, the denial of the incipient nature of the world, and the denial of paradise and hellfire in the afterlife.

9 Al-Ghazālī, *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya*, 42.

10 Ibid., 76–79.

11 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix II: *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya wa al-faḍāil al-mustaẓhiriyya*," 221.

12 In *Sunan Abu Dāwūd* 4597, it states that: "Muʿawiyah b. Abi Sufiyān stood among us and said: Beware! The Apostle of God stood among us and said: Beware! The people of the Book before were split up into seventy-two sects, and this community will be split into seventy-three: seventy-two of them will go to Hell and one of them will go to Paradise, and it is the majority group (*al-jamāʿa*)." In *al-Tirmidhī* 2641, it states: "Indeed the children of Israʾil split into seventy-two sects, and my Ummah will split into seventy-three sects. All of them are in the Fire Except one sect." He said: "And which is it O Messenger of God?" He said: "What I am upon and my Companions."

13 Al-Ghazālī, *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya*, 87–90.

14 In *Sunan Abu Dāwūd* 3592, it states that: "When the Messenger of God intended to send Muʿādh ibn Jabal to the Yemen, he asked: How will you judge when the occasion of deciding a case arises? He replied: I shall judge in accordance with God's Book. He asked: [What will you do] if you do not find any guidance in God's Book? He replied: [I shall act] in accordance with the Sunnah of the Messenger of God (ṣ). He asked: [What will you do] if you do not find any guidance in the Sunnah of the Messenger of God (ṣ) and in God's Book? He replied: I shall do my best to form an opinion and I shall spare no effort (*ijtihād al-raʾy*). The Messenger of God (ṣ) then patted him on the breast and said: Praise be to God Who has helped the messenger of the Messenger of God to find something which pleases the Messenger of God."

15 The estimation of this transmission, as to whether it is probable or certain, is itself an intellectual judgement.

16 Mitha, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismailis. A Debate on Reason and Authority in Medieval Islam*, 61.

17 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix II: *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya wa al-faḍāil al-mustaẓhiriyya*," 226.

18 Al-Ghazālī, *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya*, 84.

19 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix II: *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya wa al-faḍāil al-mustaẓhiriyya*," 248.

20 Al-Ghazālī, *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya*, 114.

21 Ghazālī uses the example of a person who denies the existence of a Necessary Being. In this case we systematically present to him the premises of the syllogism for the cosmological argument of the existence of God. If he consents to the premises, he must inevitably accept the conclusion that a Necessary Being exists.

22 Ghazālī also invokes the argument that opposition to dream-like states does not make one deny the necessity of sense perception, much like we do not deny reason because of disagreement or opposition.

23 Al-Ghazālī, *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya*, 113–114.

24 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix II: *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya wa al-faḍāil al-mustaẓhiriyya*," 250.

25 In *The Infamies*, Ghazālī remarks that the Bāṭinites have taken many of their ideas from the philosophers. However, it is interesting to note that, although many of their teachings are similar, their epistemological approach is different. The Bāṭinites reject reason and give sole reliance to authority (*taʾlīm*), whereas the philosophers overestimate reason and jettison authority. Ghazālī's polemical role in *The Infamies* and *The Incoherence* are different. In the former he vindicates the role of reason, and in the latter he places limitations on its scope.

26 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix II: *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya wa al-faḍāil al-mustaẓhiriyya*," 255–256. He presents the example that "the world is incipient or preeternal, and the incipient is

one and the preeternal is one; so they indeed share in the property of oneness, but they are divided into the true and the false."

27 Ibid.
28 Al-Ghazālī, *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya*, 124–125.
29 Ibid., 85.
30 Kukkonen, "Al-Ghazālī's Skepticism Revisited," 36–37.
31 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix II: *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya wa al-faḍāil al-mustaẓhiriyya*," 259.
32 Al-Ghazālī, *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya*, 130.
33 Ibid., 79.
34 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix II: *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya wa al-faḍāil al-mustaẓhiriyya*," 223.
35 Ibid., 227.
36 Ibid.
37 van Ess, "Skepticism in Islamic Religious Thought," 95.
38 Mitha, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismailis. A Debate on Reason and Authority in Medieval Islam*, 62.
39 Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. 2, 184–185.
40 Mitha, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismailis. A Debate on Reason and Authority in Medieval Islam*, 99.
41 Griffel, "Review: Al-Ghazālī and the Ismailis. A Debate on Reason and Authority in Medieval Islam by Farouk Mitha."
42 Mitha, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismailis. A Debate on Reason and Authority in Medieval Islam*, 90.
43 For a comprehensive overview of Ghazālī's hermeneutics in his *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayna al-Islām wa al-zandaqa, Al-Mustaṣfā min ʿilm al-uṣūl, Kitāb ādāb tilāwat al-Qurʾān, Jawāhir al-Qurʾān, Mishkāt al-anwār, Kitāb qawāʿid al-ʿaqāʾid* and *Al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*, see Whittingham, *Al-Ghazālī and the Qurʾan*.
44 Al-Ghazālī, *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya*, 46–47.
45 Ibid., 48–53.
46 In the *Mizān al-ʿAmal*, Ghazālī cites the Prophetic Tradition that says, "The angels do not enter into a house where there are dogs." He comments on it, stating that: "the tradition refers to both the literal dogs of the physical house and the metaphorical dogs of human vices of the spiritual heart. The Tradition does not only refer to physical dirt, but also spiritual dirt. Just as a dog dirties a physical house, vices dirty the house of religion. The heart is that house of religion, which is sometimes occupied by the dogs of vices and sometimes by angels." Al-Ghazālī, *The Scale of Action: Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's Mīzān al-ʿamal*. Al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, 342. In the *Jawāhir al-Qurʾān*, other examples of the existence of an esoteric (*bāṭin*) meaning in *addition* to an exoteric (*ẓāhir*) meaning are given, thus showing the harmony between the two readings of the texts. Al-Ghazālī, *Jawāhir al-Qurān*.
47 Whittingham, *Al-Ghazālī and the Qurʾan*, 38.
48 For a discussion of Ghazālī's Sufi Hermeneutics, see Ibid., 37–63.
49 Ghazālī's two hermeneutical approaches are presented in the last section of the second chapter of *Kitāb qawāʿid al-ʿaqāʾid*. For a discussion of the two hermeneutical approaches, see Ibid., 56–63.
50 Al-Ghazālī, *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya*, 50.
51 (Q. 23: 12–16).
52 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix II: *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya wa al-faḍāil al-mustaẓhiriyya*," 205.
53 "Truly your Lord is God, who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then mounted the throne (Q. 7:54)."

54 In *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 758a, it states that: "Abu Huraira reported God's Messenger (ṣ) as saying: Our Lord, the Blessed and the Exalted, descends every night to the lowest heaven when one-third of the latter part of the night is left, and says: Who supplicates Me so that I may answer him? Who asks Me so that I may give to him? Who asks Me forgiveness so that I may forgive him?" It is also narrated in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 6321, *Sunan Abu Dāwūd 1315*, and *Sahīh Muslim* 758b. Al-Ghazālī, *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya*, 53.

55 Ibid.

56 Al-Ghazālī, "*Fayṣal al-tafriqa*," 257.

57 Al-Ghazālī, *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayna al-Islām wa al-zandaqa*, 94.

58 Al-Ghazālī, "*Fayṣal al-tafriqa*," 261–262.

59 Al-Ghazālī, *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayna al-Islām wa al-zandaqa*, 99–100.

60 Ibid., 100.

61 Ibid.

62 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix II: *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya wa al-faḍāil al-mustazhiriyya*," 268. Translation modified.

63 Al-Ghazālī, "*Fayṣal al-tafriqa*," 261–262. Whittingham, *Al-Ghazālī and the Qurʾan*, 24–25.

64 Whittingham, *Al-Ghazālī and the Qurʾan*, 24–25.

65 Ibid., 25.

66 Al-Ghazālī, *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayna al-Islām wa al-zandaqa*, 106.

67 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, 88.

68 For a discussion on the purpose of the *Qiṣtas*, see Whittingham, *Al-Ghazālī and the Qurʾan*, 82–88.

69 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, 57. In Ghazālī's logical treatises, such as the *Mīʿyār al-ʿilm*, *Miḥak al-naẓar fī al-manṭiq*, and the logical section of the *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*, he regards the following five judgements as viable to be used in a demonstrative syllogism: "first principles," judgements of perception, judgements of experience, unanimous narration, propositions containing in themselves syllogisms by their very nature.

70 Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 69.

71 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix III: *Qiṣtās al-mustaqīm*," 330.

72 Ibid., 331.

73 The fact that *kalām* was merely a science of disputation is a critique Ghazālī consistently expresses in the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulum al-dīn*. With later *mutakallimūn* such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d.1210), Qadhi ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d.1355), Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d.1390), and Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d.1413), we see the implementation of syllogistic reasoning in the discipline of *kalām*. *Kalām* becomes not just merely a science of disputation, but a science that becomes a means to know the nature of things (*ḥaqāʾiq al-ashyāʾ*), a *burhānī kalām*. For a discussion of this, see: Styer, "The Proper Relationship between Belief, Scientific Knowledge, and Mystical Experience: Reconsidering the Position of Imam Al-Ghazali Stated in His Iḥyāʾ ʿūlum al-dīn."

74 Whittingham, *Al-Ghazālī and the Qurʾan*, 87.

75 Ibid.

76 Al-Ghazālī, *Qiṣtās al-Mustaqīm*, 123–125. In responding to the Bāṭinite, Ghazālī explains his approach to dispelling disagreement among men (assuming they would listen to him). However, at the same time, he states that disagreement is a necessity.

77 He also references the verse (Q. 57:25): "Indeed […] We sent down the Book and the Balance with them, that people would uphold justice. And we sent down iron, etc." He discusses how the Book, the Balance, and iron is a reference to the treatment for the three classes of people, the commoners (*al-ʿawām*), the elite (*al-khawāṣ*), and the contentious debaters (*ahl al-jadal wa al-shaghab*) respectively.

78 Al-Ghazālī, *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*, 124.

79 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix III: *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*," 324–325.

80 Al-Ghazālī, *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*, 48.

81 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix III: *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*," 291.

82 In the first figure, the middle term (M) is the subject of the major premise and the predicate of the minor premise. In the second figure, the middle term (M) is the predicate of both premises. In the third figure, the middle term (M) is the subject of both premises. The major premise is the premise that contains the major term (P). The minor premise is the premise that contains the minor term (S). The major term is the predicate of the conclusion, and the minor term (S) is the subject of the conclusion. The middle term (M) is the term not present in the conclusion.

83 Al-Ghazālī, *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*, 96.

84 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix III: *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*," 293.

85 Ibid., 294.

86 Ibid., 293. A DARII is of the syllogistic mood <a,i,i> in the first figure. 'a' represents a universal affirmative, 'e' universal negative, 'i' particular affirmative, and 'o' a particular negative.

87 According to López-Farjeat (2015), Ghazālī probably intended to produce a BARBARA <a,a,a>, and according to Whittingham (2011), it is a BARBARA. However, this does not seem plausible, since only one of the premises is a universal affirmative.

88 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix III: *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*," 298.

89 Ibid., 297.

90 A CESARE is of the syllogistic mood <e,a,e> in the second figure.

91 A FESTINO is of the syllogistic mood <e,i,o> in the second figure.

92 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix III: *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*," 299.

93 Nasr et al., *The Study Quran*, 285.

94 Ibid., 286.

95 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix III: *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*," 299.

96 A CAMESTRES is of the syllogistic mood <a,e,e> in the second figure.

97 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix III: *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*," 298.

98 Al-Ghazālī, *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*, 78.

99 A DARAPTI is of the syllogistic mood <a,a,i> in the third figure.

100 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix III: *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*," 300.

101 Ibid., 303.

102 This is also known as *modus tollendo tollens* (mode that by denying denies). This form is closely related to the *modus ponens* (affirming the antecedent), also known as *modus ponendo ponens*. This takes the form "If P, then Q. P is true, therefore Q must also be true."

103 Translation from Abdel Haleem, *The Quran*. Ghazālī builds a second syllogism of the same form from the Quranic verse "Say, "If there were other gods along with Him, as they say there are, then they would have tried to find a way to the Lord of the Throne (Q. 17:42).""

104 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix III: *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*," 302.

105 Ibid., 305.

106 Ibid., 304.

107 Al-Ghazālī, *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*, 94.

108 Ibid., 119. In *The Deliverance*, Ghazālī states that, "one cannot know that a miracle proves a prophet's veracity unless he also knows magic and how to distinguish between it and a miracle, and unless he knows that God is not leading His servants astray – and the problem of "leading astray" and the difficulty of formulating an accurate answer to it are notorious."

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid., 120.

111 For a comprehensive discussion of this, see López-Farjeat, "Al-Ghazālī on Knowledge (*ʿilm*) and Certainty (*yaqīn*) in al-Munqidh min aḍ-dalal and in al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm."

112 Al-Ghazālī, *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*, 120.

113 López-Farjeat, "Al-Ghazālī on Knowledge (*ʿilm*) and Certainty (*yaqīn*) in *al-Munqidh min aḍ-dalal* and in *al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*," 249.

114 It is interesting to note that Ghazālī uses the metaphor of light in both cases. He attained respite from his scepticism through a divine light cast in his breast, and subsequently, attained faith in the necessary truths. Also, he states that the Quran is a book of light because of the usage and endorsement of syllogistic reasoning. He states in the *Qiṣṭas*, "And were it not for the Quran's containing the balances it would not be correct to call the Quran 'Light,' for light is not seen in itself but by it other things are seen, and this is the quality of the balance." Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix III: *Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*," 324–325.

115 López-Farjeat, "Al-Ghazālī on Knowledge (*ʿilm*) and Certainty (*yaqīn*) in *al-Munqidh min aḍ-dalal* and in *al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*," 241.

116 Ibid., 252.

117 Al-Ghazālī, *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*, 86–87.

118 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix III: *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*," 303.

119 Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 90.

120 Whittingham, *Al-Ghazālī and the Qur'an*, 98.

121 Al-Ghazālī, *Wonders of the Heart*, 65. Emphasis added.

122 The *Qiṣṭas* is a primer in syllogistic reasoning; in contrast, the *Miʿyār al-ʿilm* is one of Ghazālī's logical treatises which is more comprehensive in nature, and does not have a polemical purpose to it.

123 Al-Ghazālī, *The Scale of Action: Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's Mīzān al-ʿamal*; Al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, 224–225.

124 Moosa, *Ghazālī and the Poetics of Imagination*, 239.

125 See footnote 132.

126 Al-Ghazālī, "Appendix III: *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*," 325.

127 Al-Akiti, "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of *Falsafa*: Al-Ghazālī's *Maḍnun*, *Tahāfut*, and *Maqāṣid*, with Particular attention to their *Falsafī* Treatments of God's Knowledge of Temporal Events," 91.

Bibliography

Abdel Haleem, M. A. S. *The Quran*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Al-Akiti, M. Afifi. "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of *Falsafa*: Al-Ghazālī's *Maḍnun*, *Tahāfut*, and *Maqāṣid*, with Particular attention to their *Falsafī* Treatments of God's Knowledge of Temporal Events." In *Avicenna and His Legacy: A Golden Age of Science and Philosophy*, edited by Y. Tzvi Langermann, 51–100. Turnhout: Brepols, 2009.

Ess, Josef van. "Skepticism in Islamic Religious Thought." In *God and Man in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, edited by Charles Malik, 83–98. Beirut: Centennial Publications, 1972.

Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*. Beirut: Dar al-Minhāj, 2019.

———. "Appendix II: Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya wa al-faḍāil al-mustaẓhiriyya." In *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*. Translated by Richard J. McCarthy, 175–286. Boston: Twayne, 1980.

———. "Appendix III: Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm." In *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*. Translated by Richard J. McCarthy, 287–332. Boston: Twayne, 1980.

———. *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭīniya*. Edited by ʿAbdurraḥmān Badawī. Cairo: Muʾasasa dār al-kutub al-thaqāfiya, 1964.

———. "Fayṣal al-tafriqa." In *Majmuʿāt al-rasāʾil al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, 253–273. Cairo: Al-maktaba al-tawfiqiyya, n.d.

———. *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*. Translated by Richard J. McCarthy. Boston: University of Beirut, 1980.

———. *Jawāhir al-Qurān*. Beirut: Dār iḥyāʾ al-ʿulūm, 1985.

———. *Mīzān al-ʿamal*. Edited by Sulayman Dunya. Cairo: Darul Maʿārif, 1964.

———. *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayna al-Islām wa al-zandaqa*. Translated by Sherman A. Jackson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

———. *Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm*. Beirut: Dar al-Minhāj, 2019.

———. *The Scale of Action: Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's Mīzān al-ʿamal*. Translated by Yasien Mohamed. Forthcoming.

———. *Wonders of the Heart*. Translated by Walter James Skellie. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2007.

Griffel, Frank. "Review: Al-Ghazālī and the Ismailis. A Debate on Reason and Authority in Medieval Islam by Farouk Mitha." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 48 (2003): 175–178.

Hodgson, Marshall G. S. *The Venture of Islam*. Vol. 2, *The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods*. New ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977.

Kukkonen, Taneli. "Al-Ghazālī's Skepticism Revisited." In *Rethinking the History of Skepticism*, edited by Henrik Lagurlund, 29–59. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010.

López-Farjeat, Luis Xavier. "Al-Ghazālī on Knowledge (ʿilm) and Certainty (yaqīn) in al-Munqidh min aḍ-dalal and in al-Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm." In *Islam and Rationality: The Impact of al-Ghazālī*, edited by Georges Tamer, 229–252. Leiden: Brill, 2015.

Mitha, Farouk. *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismailis. A Debate on Reason and Authority in Medieval Islam*. London and New York: I.B.Tauris & The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2001.

Moosa, Ebrahim. *Ghazālī and the Poetics of Imagination*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, Caner K. Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph Lumbard, and Mohammed Rustom, eds. *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 2015.

Styer, Mustapha. "The Proper Relationship between Belief, Scientific Knowledge, and Mystical Experience: Reconsidering the Position of Imam Al-Ghazali Stated in His 'Iḥyāʾ ʿūlum al-dīn.'" Lecture, Abu Dhabi, UAE: Taba Foundation, 17 January 2018.

Whittingham, Martin. *Al-Ghazālī and the Qurʾan*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

3 Scepticism, certainty, and the philosophical tradition

In Chapter 2, we have demonstrated through an analysis of *The Infamies of the Esotericists* and *The Straight Balance* that Ghazālī endorses philosophical logic as a means of attaining certain knowledge. However, his polemical work, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-falāsifa*), reveals the limits of philosophical reasoning and the superior epistemological value of revelation (which in its broad sense may include mystical cognition). To achieve this end, among the many discussions, he engages in a series of sceptical stratagems in the seventeenth discussion of *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. The discussion deals with the principle of causality. Here, he anticipates Nicholas of Autrecourt (d. 1360) and David Hume (d. 1776) in their scepticism of a necessary connection between cause and effect, and also the occasionalism of Nicholas Malebranche (d. 1715). Ghazālī is no novice to Greek philosophy; prior to *The Incoherence*, he wrote *The Intentions of the Philosophers* (*Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*), an accurate exposition of Aristotelianism. This led to Roger Bacon, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas labelling him as a "genuine Peripatetic."[1]

Ghazālī's gripe with the philosophers (the followers of al-Fārābi and Avicenna) was their abandonment of the literal expressions of the Quran, and their misplaced indulgence in speculative interpretation. This led not only to their repudiation of the commandments and prohibitions of the Religious Law but to blindly embracing (*taqlīd*) philosophical doctrines such as the eternity of the world, the denial of the bodily resurrection, and the rejection of God's knowledge of the particulars. In *The Incoherence,* Ghazālī shows the philosophers' erroneous application of logic and its limited scope in understanding reality, and thus, the necessity of taking recourse to revelation. *The Incoherence* has left a lasting impact on Islamic intellectual thought, and attracted numerous responses, including bringing the Muslim Aristotelian Ibn Rushd (d. 1198) to write a rejoinder, *The Incoherence of the incoherence* (*Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*). Ghazālī's ambiguous expression of causality in *The Incoherence* has invited much commentary in modern scholarship as to whether he accepts or rejects efficient causality. He presents two theories of causality, an Ashʿarite and a modified Aristotelian conception. However, his objectives in both cases are to vindicate the omnipotence of God and the rational possibility of miracles. The relevance of the discussion of causality in this chapter is to show

Ghazālī's scepticism of Avicennian causality (cosmology), and how it led him to conclude that divine revelation is a superior epistemological means of attaining certainty. It will also demonstrate his commitment to Ashʿarite cosmology.

Early Ashʿarite and Avicennian cosmology

Ghazālī was sceptical of the Muslim philosophers' (*falāsifa*) cosmology, and his critique was directed mainly at Avicenna's idea of causality. In order to understand Ghazālī's critique of Avicenna, we need to first understand his theological point of departure. Hence we begin this section with a brief background on Ashʿarite cosmology, and thereafter an introduction to Avicennian cosmology.

Numerous Quranic verses[2] emphasise the omnipotence of God and imply that He is the only and direct cause of phenomena and events that occur in the world. This led the Ashʿarites (and some Muʿtazilites) to deny efficient causality, and to believe that God created everything in the world directly without any intermediary, denying any causal power to the things of the world.[3] Thus, through God things come into existence, are destroyed and recreated. This act of continuous creation is germane to Ashʿarite cosmology. The world is consistently moving between existence and non-existence. This notion of continuous recreation implies that there is no causal connection between "cause and effect" or successive events in the phenomenal world. It is God alone that creates the cause and the effect independently of each other. Thus, no causal necessity exists between events, and God may possibly disrupt his custom (*ʿāda*) by creating a miracle.

It is important to consider that Ghazālī's predecessor, Abū Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 936), like Ghazālī himself, was no extreme occasionalist. He held that it was not possible for God to perform the *logically* impossible, and vindicated our knowledge of the world through accounting for the habit (*ʿāda*) of God (quasi-naturalism). In his *Maqālāt*, he criticises the radical occasionalism of Ṣāliḥ Qubba and Abū Ḥusayn al-Ṣāliḥī. He states that

> I have heard that it was said to him [Ṣāliḥ Qubba]: "How do you know that at this very moment you are not in Mecca sitting under a dome which has been set over you but unaware of it, although you are perfectly sound, sane, and unimpaired, simply because God has not created knowledge of it in you?" And he replied, "I don't." And so he was nicknamed "Qubba" or the Dome.[4]

Regarding Abū Ḥusayn al-Ṣāliḥī, al-Ashʿari states:

> [al-Ṣāliḥī] allowed that God could render non-existent the power of a man while he was alive, making him alive but powerless, and that He could obliterate life in a man while his power and knowledge remained, so that he would be aware and capable but dead.[5]

In following al-Ashʿari, a moderate occasionalism can also be seen in Ashʿarite theologians such as al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013) and Ghazālī's teacher, al-Juwaynī

(d. 1085). They both held that God has power over all possibilities but logical contradictions are not part of this domain.[6] Thus, in Ashʿarite theology God has power over all things. However, He cannot perform logical absurdities and He does not operate by "his caprice" but according to His custom (ʿāda).

In contradistinction to the philosophers, the Ashʿarites held the view that things do not have natures (ṭabāʾi) or intrinsic causal power. Bodies are composed of indivisible atoms (constantly recreated), which are homogeneous and do not consist of differentiating qualities which may give a body an intrinsic nature (ṭabʿ).[7] Instead, it is God who gives it its accidental qualities continuously upon its constant recreation. In *al-Tamhīd*, al-Bāqillānī argues that there is no necessary connection between fire and burning, or between drinking alcohol and drunkenness. He states that this connection is not because of the nature (ṭabʿ) of the fire or alcohol but of God.[8] Thus, effect does not follow *necessarily* from its cause, but on occasion of it by the divine will or habit.

The Muslim philosophers' (falāsifa) cosmology presented a different conception of the world to that of the Ashʿarites. In *The Incoherence*, Ghazālī predominantly critiques Avicenna's (d. 1037) philosophy, which follows mainly an Aristotelian cosmology but incorporates a Neoplatonic emanationist scheme. The cosmology of Avicenna is deterministic, and necessitates a causal mechanism which does not permit supernatural intervention in the natural course of events. In this scheme, God is the First Cause through which all things flow or are derived. All of creation flows from God through a series of necessary emanations.[9] God is the Necessary existent, and all subsequent existents proceed necessarily from Him. Thus, the Muslim philosophers held that "the world is contingent on God, but co-eternal with Him."[10] This is in opposition to the orthodox notion of creation ex nihilo.

Avicenna argues that causes necessitate their effects. In the case of bringing fire and cotton together, it is necessary that the fire will burn the cotton. It is noted from repeated sense perception that fire has the intrinsic causal power to burn, and cotton has the intrinsic power to be burnt.[11] To Avicenna, the notion that an effect is not necessitated by its cause (i.e. cotton is not burnt by fire) is a categorical contradiction.[12] Therefore, both agents and recipients have intrinsic natures (ṭabāʾi) which necessitate the occurrence of events.[13] To Avicenna, there is a necessary nexus between cause and effect; otherwise, things will remain in a state of possibility and never come into existence.[14] He thus states that, "with the existence of the cause, the existence of every effect is necessary; and the existence of its cause necessitates the existence of the effect."[15]

The principle of causality in *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*

The introduction to part two of *The Incoherence* deals with the natural sciences. In it, Ghazālī states that most of what consists of part of the natural sciences does not conflict with the Sacred Law. However, the philosopher's judgement that "the nexus between cause and effect is necessary" should be denied. The aforesaid denial affirms miracles such as the resurrection of the dead, the splitting of the moon, and the turning of a serpent into a staff. It vindicates the possibility

of divine intervention in the natural course of events, and thus, the omnipotence of God. Thus, a literal interpretation of these events is obligatory as opposed to the philosopher's misplaced metaphorical interpretation. Ghazālī remarks that miracles are not foreign to their doctrine; they deem it possible that a prophet can have knowledge of future events, can comprehend intelligibles without intellectual effort, and can arbitrarily influence nature (i.e. blowing of the wind, inducing earthquakes, etc.) through a strong imaginative faculty, theoretical rational faculty, and practical faculty of the soul, respectively. However, he wishes them to accept the rational possibility of the other miracles too, as revealed in the Quran. By so doing, he wishes them to acknowledge the limits of reason, and accept the epistemic superiority of revelation in attaining certainty.

In our study, it is important to consider that *The Incoherence* is a polemical work, not a work of personal theological doctrine. It's a work aimed at deconstruction, not the construction or affirmation of a doctrine. Ghazālī states, "I do not enter into [argument] objecting to them, except as one who demands and denies, not as one who claims [and] affirms."[16] Thus, it is a sceptical work aimed at undermining the philosophers, and not necessarily a declaration of his own doctrine. He uses Ashʿarite occasionalism to make his case, but also appropriates philosophical naturalism. Marmura argues that *The Incoherence* is a prequel to the *Moderation in Belief* (*al-Iqtiṣād fī al-iʿtiqād*) wherein he expounds on his personal doctrine and unequivocally takes an Ashʿarite theological stance on matters.[17] In *The Incoherence*, Ghazālī states, "As regards affirming the true doctrine, we will write a book concerning it after completing this one […] in it we will devote ourselves to affirming, just as in this work we have devoted ourselves to destroying."[18] In the *Moderation in Belief*, he affirms his approach, stating explicitly that in *The Incoherence*, he *assumes* the position of the philosophers; however, "[it] is not in accordance with what we believe; for that book was composed to refute their doctrine, not to establish the true doctrine."[19]

In the seventeenth discussion of *The Incoherence*, dealing with causality and miracles, Ghazālī responds to two philosophical positions or opponents. The first holds that in the case that fire and cotton come into contact, the fire is the burning agent *alone*. Thus, observable things act according to their nature, and not a divine cause or principle (such as being caused by an angel). This position is most likely that of the materialists (*dahriyyūn*) who deny the existence of God.[20] The second opponent does not reject an absolute cause, but contends that things operate through secondary causes necessarily. This position is consistent with the philosophy of Avicenna (often labelled as Aristotelian Neoplatonism). In both cases, their philosophy holds that the natural course of events acts necessarily and miracles are impossible.

Prior to Ghazālī's two-pronged response to the second position, in an eclectic manner he responds to the materialists (*dahriyyūn*). He outright denies the position of the materialists, stating that God is the one that causes the burning of the cotton, directly or through the mediation of the angels. Here we see Ghazālī's clear disagreement with the materialists' denial of an absolute cause, and this leaves open the scope for an explanation through either secondary causality or occasionalism.

However, in line with the latter, he states that there is no proof that the fire is the agent of the burning; all we observe is a *concomitance* of events. It is not that the cotton is burned *by* (*bi*) the fire, but the burning occurs *with* (*ʿinda*) the contact of fire. He states that it is "clear that [something's] existence with a thing does not prove that it exists by [that thing]."[21]

Ghazālī argues against the philosophers that it is not the father's sperm in the womb or other natural conditions that give life, the powers of apprehension and movement in a newborn but the First. In addition, he states that "the imprinting of the form of colour in the eye comes from the bestower of forms."[22] The "bestower of forms" (*wāhib al-ṣuwar*), in Avicennian cosmology refers to "angels" or the "tenth intellect" in the sublunary world.[23] Therefore, in Ghazālī's appropriation of Aristotelian Neoplatonism, Ghazālī rejects the materialists' view and affirms causal powers that exist beyond perception.

Thus, Ghazālī emphasises the point that there are causes, permanent and unceasing, that are beyond our observation, which cause the conjunction of burning and fire, bread and satiety, and medicine and health. The sense perception of the phenomenal world does not establish causal connections, but merely a simultaneity of cause and effect. Ghazālī's rejection of a necessary connection between cause and effect is clearly occasionalist, though he appropriates Avicennian cosmology to affirm a divine cause that exists beyond observation.

Following this refutation, Ghazālī deals with the second position. In this case, the philosophers do not reject an absolute cause but hold that events proceed necessarily from the principles in accord with their intrinsic natures (*ṭabāʾi*), not from deliberation and choice. Thus, the philosophers argue that there is a necessary nexus between cause and effect. Based on this, they also reject the possibility of Abraham not being burnt by the fire.[24] Ghazālī responds using two approaches, the first is unmistakably an occasionalist cosmology, and in the second, he *assumes* an Avicennian cosmology.

Occasionalism and Ghazāli's sceptical assault

Ghazālī opens this discussion stating that God acts voluntarily, and that He creates the burning of the cotton upon its contact with fire. The burning does not occur by the recipient's (cotton) and the agent's (fire) nature. In this case, given that a necessary nexus between cause and effect does not exist, and what occurs is solely due to the volition of God, it becomes *rationally possible* for the burning not to occur upon the contact of cotton and fire. Ghazālī anticipates the philosopher's response as to the consequence of a denial of a necessary connection between cause and effect, and the designation of the patterns of nature to the arbitrary will of God, stating:

> let each of us allow the possibility of there being in front of him ferocious beasts, raging fires, high mountains, or enemies ready with their weapons [to kill him], but [also the possibility] that he does not see them because God does not create for him [vision of them]. And if someone leaves a book in the house, let him

allow as possible its change on his returning home into a beardless slave boy – intelligent, busy with his tasks – or into an animal; or if he leaves a boy in his house, let him allow the possibility of his changing into a dog; or [again] if he leaves ashes, [let him allow] the possibility of its change into musk; and let him allow the possibility of stone changing into gold and gold into stone. If asked about any of this, he ought to say: "I do not know what is at the house at present. All I know is that I have left a book in the house, which is perhaps now a horse that has defiled the library with its urine and its dung, and that I have left in the house a jar of water, which may well have turned into an apple tree. For God is capable of everything, and it is not necessary for the horse to be created from the sperm nor the tree to be created from the seed – indeed, it is not necessary for either of the two to be created from anything. Perhaps [God] has created things that did not exist previously."[25]

As a consequence of an occasionalist cosmology, a radical scepticism follows. The designation of the patterns of nature to the direct will of God renders our knowledge of the events of the world moot. However, Ghazālī is no extreme occasionalist like Ṣāliḥ Qubba and Abū Ḥusayn al-Ṣāliḥī (see earlier discussion), and vindicates our knowledge of the world through his theory of custom (ʿāda), a sort of quasi-naturalism, and yet upholds the possibility of God's intervention in natural events.[26] Thus, his scepticism (while on the surface similar) is nothing like a Humean scepticism, but *is* committed to the knowledge of the natural events made necessary through God's habit (ʿāda).[27]

In addition to an occasionalist account of the events of the world, Ghazālī provides an occasionalist account of our knowledge, too, stating that "God created in us the knowledge that He did not enact these possibilities."[28] God creates the events of the world, and in correspondence to it He creates the knowledge of the events of the world too; they are created independently of each other.[29] Thus, our certainty of the knowledge of the events of the world is from God, not the "fixed" natures (ṭabāʾiʿ) of the things of the world. The natures (ṭabāʾiʿ) are not intrinsic in themselves, but are given by the will of God. He remarks that he did not claim these far-fetched events to be *necessary*, but merely just possible. A book turning into an animal is only a possibility, not an actuality. In actual fact, after the repeated observance of the events of the world, a psychological imprint of its past habit (ʿāda) establishes itself, and thus our knowledge of the world becomes reliable. The course of nature is the habit (ʿāda) of God, not the necessity of a causal nexus; thus, it allows us to render the activities of the world as sensible, and yet at the same time uphold the possibility of miracles. Although performing these miracles is possible, God creates in us the knowledge that He will not disrupt the course of events by His caprice, and events will proceed as by His custom (ʿāda). It is only in exceptional and rare circumstances, such as the confirmation of a prophet, that He suspends His habit (ʿāda).[30] Scepticism of efficient causality may act like a double-edged sword and lead to a rejection of miracles and "the problem of induction,"[31] as in the case of Hume. However, in the case of Ghazālī, scepticism of efficient causality facilitates the defence of miracles. Its negative consequence in

understanding the world is alleviated by the belief in the existence of God and trust in His consistent operation in nature.[32]

Furthermore, in the case that God suspends His habit to perform a miracle, it will not nullify our understanding of the world. God adjusts our knowledge of the world accordingly, to accommodate for the miracle. Ghazālī states that

> If, then, God disrupts the habitual [course of nature] by making [the miracle] occur at the time in which disruptions of habitual [events] take place, these cognitions [of the nonoccurrence of such unusual possibilities] slip away from [people's] hearts, and [God] does not create them.[33]

Thus, "even miracles need not threaten our epistemic security and scepticism is held at bay."[34]

Ghazālī does not dismiss the certainty of our knowledge of the world; he shifts it from the nature of things (*ṭabāʿi*) to God. God is the source of our certain knowledge (*yaqīn*) of the phenomenal world, for it is through His will that the causes and effects are created.[35] Similarly, we obtain certainty from God's revelation. In the case that He reveals to us that a miracle occurred, we accept it with certainty. We can accept with the same certainty, as Ghazālī has shown, the rational possibility of a miracle's occurrence. Thus, there is a consistency between the events of the world and the revelation of God. Both are directly from God.

The occasionalist account of causality in this section of *The Incoherence* is consistent with the *Moderation in Belief* (*al-Iqtiṣād fī al-iʿtiqād*), the text in which Ghazālī unequivocally affirms his theological doctrine.[36] Ghazālī shows the pervasiveness of divine power, and the possibility of God breaking the habitual course of events (*al-ʿāda*).[37] He states that it is possible for God to create the feeling of heat in the hand when it touches ice, for the association of ice and cold are only concomitants and not necessarily related. In another section of the text, he discusses an individual's predestined time of death (*al-ajal*). He states that individuals die at the time God creates their death.[38] The severing of the head or other "causes" of death are not causes but are merely habitual co-occurrents. In addition to evidence from other parts of the text, the *Moderation in Belief* is evidently a work of Ashʿarite *kalām*, which emphasises the omnipotence of God and the denial of causal efficacy to the things of the world. It does not assume an Aristotelian naturalism in its discussions, for it is not a polemical work aimed at deconstruction but affirmation.

In the following section of *The Incoherence*, Ghazālī responds to the second position. Assuming an Avicennian cosmology, he argues for the possibility of miracles and the omnipotence of God.

Ghazāli's modified Aristotelianism

In this approach, Ghazālī appropriates the Avicennian cosmology for the sake of argument, developing a modified Aristotelianism. He concedes to it not out of conviction but to form an argument using their conceptual framework.[39] Thus, he

accepts that objects have natures (*ṭabāʿi*). Fire has an intrinsic nature, or agency, that will burn two like pieces of cotton without differentiating between them. In the same manner, cotton too has an intrinsic nature that allows it to act as a recipient to burning. However, Ghazālī regards as possible that Prophet Abraham may have been thrown into the pit of fire without being burnt, either because of the change in the quality (*ṣifa*) of the fire or the change in the quality of his body. He argues that a divine source may change the quality of the fire such that its heat is contained (the nature remains but the heat does not transcend it), or the quality of the body may change such that it is resistant to the fire. Ghazālī states that a person who has not seen someone covered in talc (which contains asbestos) sitting in a fiery furnace and not affected by the fire, will deny its occurrence. In the same manner, because they did not witness its occurrence, they deny the possibility that it is in God's power to change the quality of the fire (agent) or the cotton (recipient). Ghazālī remarks that there are "strange and wondrous things," or rare and arbitrary occurrences in nature, that have not been observed. Thus, there is no reason for the philosophers to judge prophetic miracles as impossible, because they have no empirical experience of them.

Ghazālī continues, stating that the bodily resurrection and the miracle of Moses changing a staff into a snake is possible. The changing of a staff into a snake is merely just the shortening of time, or the acceleration of a natural process. This is deemed possible because matter can convert into other types of matter, as long as it takes place via natural stages of succession. A wooden staff may convert into the elements of earth, and then plants may form from these elements. These plants may then be eaten by animals, and those animals (i.e. herbivores) eaten by other animals (i.e. snakes). Ghazālī argues that it is in the power of God to shorten this natural cycle. Thus, through this "natural" acceleration, a prophetic miracle is performed.

Ghazālī's explanation of the above occurrences holds that they are not interruptions in the physical course of events but are marvellous events that can be understood as "effects of natural causes."[40] They are not miracles present in an occasionalist universe, but these so-called miracles are marvellous events that occur in a naturalist universe on extremely rare occasions. The laws of nature are not violated but are used to produce remarkable events such as miracles. In this approach, Ghazālī "accepts the 'autonomy' of physical laws, but demands that their 'breaking' should be initiated by Allah through the prophet, using nature's laws."[41] In this modified Aristotelianism, Ghazālī maintains that the divine power is omnipotent, not necessitated, and operates in such a way that new casual conditions are created to produce remarkable events (i.e. miracles).[42] He states that:

> The denial of this is only due to our lack of capacity to understand, [our lack of] familiarity with exalted beings, and our unawareness of the secrets of God, praised be He, in creation and nature. Whoever studies [inductively] the wonders of the sciences will not deem remote from the power of God, in any manner whatsoever, what has been related of the miracles of the prophets.[43]

Ghazālī is stating that our experience and inductive reasoning cannot affirm the impossibility of "miracles." There are phenomena outside of what humans have

observed in nature. The philosophers' very own cosmology should lead to a con-cession of the possibility of miracles. Halevi remarks that:

> By embracing the very religious beliefs the philosopher decries as wholly absurd, and by justifying these beliefs with the very logic of natural philosophy, the theologian in fact makes a joke of Aristotelian epistemology […] For if Aristotelian aetiology is applicable to any possible world conjured up by the theologian, then it loses its grip on the real world. The natural philosopher is forced to concede that his reliance on human reason and on sense perception as the grounds for knowledge about causes was imperfect and enthusiastic.[44]

Ghazālī thus appropriated the language or conceptual framework of natural phil-osophy to explain miraculous change.[45] It was not necessarily a concession on his part but a means to prove the possibility of miracles and show the limitations of Aristotelian logic in acquiring certainty of the natural world. *The Incoherence* is a dialectical work; it assumes the premises or principles of the philosophers in order to refute their conclusions.[46] Dialectical reasoning differs from demonstra-tive reasoning in that the premises are accepted by the interlocutor but are not necessarily true or primary. Thus, in this case, the philosophers cannot invalidate Ghazālī's critique and claim that his refutation operated from a different set of premises they did not accept.[47] Ghazālī's use of Avicenna's language does not mean that he was not committed to the Ashʿarite understanding of the world.[48] In establishing that miracles are possible in the second causal theory, he is defending that revelatory reports regarding miracles should be taken literally, and not diluted by metaphorical interpretation.

Certainty and revelation (prophecy and mystical cognition)

Scholarship surrounding Ghazālī's cosmology has been varied, with some stating that Ghazālī is without a doubt an Ashʿarite occasionalist; others arguing that he conceded to the naturalism of Avicenna; others suggesting that he is agnostic about the matter; and some suggesting a synthesis between the two. However, without a doubt, a consistent thread present in his work is his defence of the epistemic role of revelation. In the eleventh century, philosophy posed a threat to revelation.[49] It assumed that it can arrive at a superior knowledge of God and the reality of existence without the aid of revelation. *The Incoherence* does not dismiss the value of philosophy but attempts to demonstrate its limitations, and subdue the overconfidence of the philosophers.[50] Paradigmatic to Ghazālī's epis-temology is revelation, and its superiority to the intellect in attaining certainty (*yaqīn*). Ghazālī attempted to show the rational possibility of miracles in the seventeenth discussion of *The Incoherence*, and vindicate the place of revelation. Thus, the miracles revealed in the Quran are not to be deemed as figurative or dismissed as mere fables for the common folk (*ʿawām*). They are to be under-stood as literally true.

It is out of the reach of philosophy to attain certainty on all matters of reality. Ghazālī shows that the philosophers cannot with apodictic certainty establish

the impossibility of miracles. It can only show its *possibility*. We take recourse to revelation to attain certainty about miracles such as the bodily resurrection. Demonstrative reasoning, as we have discussed in the previous chapter, provides certain knowledge when properly applied. However, it is limited in scope and should be aided by revelation.[51] Ghazālī states in the seventeenth discussion that

> for the possible amounts of such special [prophetic qualities] are not encompassed by the mind. Why, then, with [all] this, must one disbelieve that whose transmission has been corroborated by innumerable reports (*tawātur*), and belief in which is enjoined by the religious law [i.e. revelation].[52]

Here, Ghazālī is stating that the miracles stated in revelation and widely transmitted prophetic reports (*tawātur*) should not be rejected. The question of their occurrence falls outside the ambit of the intellect and can only be known through revelation.

In the *Moderation in Belief* (*al-Iqtiṣād fī al-iʿtiqād*), Ghazālī lucidly explains what can be known through reason alone, through revelation alone, or both.[53] He states that we can understand the creation of the world, the existence of God, and His power, will, and knowledge through reason but not the physical resurrection, congregation, and the reward and punishment in the hereafter, which can only be known through revelation.[54] Consistent with the hermeneutical approach he outlines in *The Decisive Criterion* and *The Infamies of the Esotericists*, he remarks in the *Moderation in Belief* that reason and revelation are never contrary to one another. Only when reason regards a matter in revelation as impossible, should it then be interpreted figuratively.[55] However, if a matter is not known through reason, but is deemed as possible through reason, it should be accepted literally.[56] As we have seen in our preceding discussion, Ghazālī is consistent with this hermeneutical approach in *The Incoherence,* too.

Consistently in *The Incoherence*, Ghazālī shows that the philosophers have not apodictically demonstrated their doctrines. Ghazālī does not aim to refute philosophy, but some of the metaphysical doctrines of the philosophers and their misplaced reliance on reason. In the second discussion of *The Incoherence* dealing with the eternity of the universe, he says:

> And, if it has become evident that we do not deem it rationally remote for the world's duration to be everlasting, but regard either its rendering it eternal in the future or annihilating it as [both] possible, then which of the two possibilities becomes fact is only known through the revealed law. Hence, the examination of this [question] is not connected with what is rationally apprehended.[57]

The notion of the world's annihilation or post-eternity is a matter known by virtue of revelation, not the intellect. This matter is not something that can be determined indubitably through demonstrative reasoning but only through a meta-rational source. Thus, the mind should submit to revelation to attain certainty on the matter. Not only does Ghazālī make clear the scope of the intellect, but also the

philosophers' inability to properly apply logic. He states in the introduction to *The Incoherence*:

> We will make it plain that what they set down as a condition for the truth of the matter of the syllogism in the part on demonstrating [their] logic, and what they set forth as a condition for its form in the *Book of the Syllogism*, and the various things they posited in the *Isagoge* and the *Categories* which are parts of logic and its preliminaries, [are things] none of which have they been able to fulfil in their metaphysical sciences.[58]

Prior to this, Ghazālī states that logic is not the philosophers' monopoly; rather, it is a universal discipline. The *mutakallimūn* (theologians) themselves are acquainted with it; however, their phraseology is different. Philosophers should not assume a posture of superiority in acquaintance with the subject. The above-cited paragraph points out that the arguments of the philosophers do not in actual fact meet the standards of the philosophers' very own books of logic. Ghazālī does not have a grievance with logic itself, but with the philosophers' failed application of it. He not only found a problem with their metaphysics and natural sciences but also their epistemological system, which overextends the scope of logic and undermines the certainty revelation provides. They should not arrogate to themselves knowledge in matters beyond their intellect. They should know that demonstrative reasoning cannot provide certainty in matters particularly reserved for revelation.

Besides the fact that the philosophers' syllogisms are not strictly demonstrative, Ghazālī accuses them of uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*).[59] He remarks that they (a group of the philosophers) have been enchanted by the legacy of Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle, and so on, and the exaggerations of their followers.[60] Thus, they assume that their teachings are infallible, and consequently, repudiate the revealed law and assume religious traditions are man-made fancies. He states that they hold self-admiration for not imitating religious authority, and yet they find themselves imitating falsehood uncritically (*taqlīd*), *not* affirmed by demonstrative certainty (*burhān*). He compares this group of philosophers to the Christians and Jews who uncritically embraced their religious traditions, short-sighted in not seeing their falsehood. They replace the legitimate authority of the Prophet (ṣ) for an illegitimate authority, based on their slavish acceptance (*taqlīd*). Due to their intellectual arrogance, they

> have rejected the Islamic duties regarding acts of worship, disdained religious rites pertaining to the offices of prayer and the avoidance of prohibited things, belittled the devotions and ordinances prescribed by the divine law, not halting in the face of its prohibitions and restrictions. On the contrary, they have entirely cast off the reins of religion through multifarious beliefs.[61]

Ghazālī is not only protecting the epistemological role of revelation, but by extension the moral and religious life of Islam. One of the primary purposes of *The Incoherence* is to humble the philosophers and give revelation its rightful place.

He does this through pointing out their uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*) and unfounded claims to demonstrative proof (*burhān*).

Ghazālī does not hold back in using sceptical devices to undermine the metaphysical doctrines of the philosophers. He states in the last paragraph of the introduction to *The Incoherence*:

> Let it be known that there is neither firm foundation nor perfection in the doctrine they hold; that they judge in terms of supposition and surmise, without verification or certainty; that they use the appearance of their mathematical and logical sciences as evidential proof for the truth of their metaphysical sciences, using [this] as a gradual enticement for the weak in mind. Had their metaphysical sciences been as perfect in demonstration, free from conjecture, as their mathematical, they would not have disagreed among themselves regarding [the former], just as they have not disagreed in their mathematical sciences.[62]

Ghazālī clearly states here that he does not disagree with them in matters of the mathematical and logical sciences.[63] He actually warns against this, stating that attempts to refute something indubitable will only entertain doubts about revelation. In the eleventh century, the mathematical sciences were regarded as part of philosophy. He critiques the philosophers for giving the appearance that metaphysical science and the mathematical sciences are on the same level of certainty. Taking a page from the Bāṭinites, Ghazālī invokes the sceptical critique that there is disagreement among the philosophers, unlike the agreement found in the mathematical sciences. The disagreement between them shows that their philosophical judgements are not universal as they claim.[64] Many of their arguments are not demonstrable but founded on conjecture and uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*). There are matters in metaphysics whereby certainty cannot be attained through the enterprise of reason, but through revelation alone. The certainty about the bodily resurrection is one such example.

The Bāṭinites and the philosophers both reject the bodily resurrection. Both polemical works, *The Infamies* (discussed in the previous chapter) and *The Incoherence*, deal with the matter. It is included in the theme of the natural sciences, and thus addressed in the twentieth, and final, discussion of *The Incoherence*. Ghazālī argues that the bodily resurrection is rationally possible, and thus we should submit to revelation's affirmation of its occurrence. He argues that the lack of empirical evidence of its occurrence is not sufficient reason to claim its impossibility. Ghazālī states that

> the one who denies the resurrection does not give thought to [the question] of how he would know the confining of the causes of existence to what he has observed. For it is not improbable that in the resurrection of bodies there is a pattern other than what he observes.[65]

He suggests that the bodily resurrection can occur directly through the divine power without mediation or some "wondrous" cause not witnessed before, but

either way, we have to rationally accept its possibility.[66] This much the mind can determine; however, to tip the scale in the direction of certainty (*yaqīn*), we turn to a higher arbiter of truth, revelation. The philosophers have limited their conception of reality to what they have observed, but to Ghazālī there are many possible worlds that God may bring into existence. Ghazālī subscribes not only to a plurality of possible worlds but also a plurality of sources of knowledge.[67]

According to Paul Heck, Ghazālī implements a sceptical stratagem in *The Incoherence* called "learned ignorance," which is the notion that our "inability to know is knowledge" (*al-ʿajz ʿan al-idrāk idrāk*).[68] He states that "Ghazālī made use of a kind of scepticism to counter the claims of the philosophers to have surer knowledge of God than prophets."[69] He further states that *The Incoherence* was "written not in condemnation of the philosophical method, but rather as a challenge to the supremacy of its claims to yield certain knowledge."[70] Ghazālī's scepticism shows that philosophical reasoning has epistemic limitations, and it is via the meta-rational sources of knowledge that we gain certainty of the nature of the world. The institution of prophecy (*waḥy*) and mystical cognition (*maʿrifa*) provide certainty on matters that fall outside the scope of the intellect. In *The Deliverance from Error*, we have seen how Ghazālī's methodological scepticism of sensory and rational perception led him to speculate as to the existence of a higher arbitrator of truth, like the spiritual states the Sufis claim to experience (discussed in Chapter 1, this volume). In *The Incoherence*, we see how Ghazālī's scepticism of philosophical logic leads to affirming the superior epistemic role of prophetic revelation and spiritual intuition.

Revelation in Ghazālī's epistemology should not be considered in the narrow sense of prophetic revelation (*waḥy*) alone, but should include divine inspiration (*ilhām*) as well. Ghazālī states in the *Moderation in Belief*,

> Regarding that which is only known through the revelation, it specifies one of two possibilities which is the actual one. This is inaccessible to the intellect independently. It can only be known through God independently (Exalted is He), through *revelation and inspiration*, and we know it, through hearing, from the one to whom it is revealed.[71]

According to Treiger:

> Revelation must be understood in the broad sense, so as to include both prophecy and the post-prophetic mystical cognition: *ilhām* (inspiration) and *mukāshafa* (unveiling). Al-Ghazālī's goal was to make room for the epistemological claims of Revelation in this broad sense: i.e. for the epistemological claims of both prophecy and mystical cognition. He aimed, first, to delineate areas of investigation inaccessible to philosophical inquiry, and second, to declare these areas accessible to both prophecy and the post-prophetic mystical cognition.[72]

Ghazālī's vindication of revelation (*waḥy*), and by extension, the religious and moral practice of Muslims, epistemically makes room for divine inspiration (*ilhām*) and

spiritual unveiling (*kashf*). It is through religious and ethical praxis that mystical cognition is attained. Ghazālī's magnum opus, *The Revival of the Religious Sciences* (*Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*), completed in 1097 CE, immediately after *The Incoherence*, is a work focused on the "science of the path to the afterlife" (*ʿilm ṭarīq al-ākhira*). It can be argued that *The Incoherence* epistemically makes way for *The Revival.* It is only through defending and giving a legitimate place to revelation (*waḥy*) and its Sacred Law that the spiritual path to mystical cognition can be achieved. The religious life of Islam and supererogatory Sufi practices is a path to a higher knowledge which only becomes accessible if the limitations of philosophical demonstration are recognised. Revelation (*waḥy*) and mystical cognition (*maʿrifa*) are a central feature in Ghazālī's epistemology. They complement, but do not contradict philosophy. Ghazālī thus sought to humble the pretentions of the philosophers and lay bare the limitations of philosophical logic prior to underscoring religious praxis and the Sufi path to acquiring the highest level of certainty.[73]

In *The Deliverance of Error*, he explicitly alludes to this, stating:

> In general, then, the prophets (Peace be upon them!) are the physicians for treating the maladies of hearts. By its activity reason is useful simply to acquaint us with this fact, to bear witness to prophecy by giving assent to its reality, *to certify its own blindness to perceiving what the "eye" of prophecy perceives*, and to take us by our hands and turn us over to the prophets as blind men are handed over to guides and as troubled sick men are handed over to sympathetic physicians.[74]

Two important points arise from this paragraph: firstly, the intellect's recognition of its own epistemic limitations and thus the necessity to resort to prophetic revelation; secondly, prophetic revelation as the vanguard to spiritual guidance and ethical cultivation. Such religious praxis is not only a means to salvation (*najāt*) and felicity (*saʿāda*) in the hereafter but also a means to certainty in the temporal world.

Ghazālī states in *The Incoherence* that "what is intended is to show your impotence in your claim of knowing the true nature of things through conclusive demonstrations, and to shed doubt on your claims."[75] Ghazālī attempts to move beyond just seeing the things of nature through the lens of essences and "how they are in themselves" towards a higher order of knowledge attained through mystical vision, and thus to witness nature *with* God, the sole existence. He states in *The Niche of Lights* (*Mishkāt al-anwār*):

> They see nothing but God is seen with it. Some of them even go to the length of saying: we have seen nothing but God was seen before it. For some of them see things through Him, others [...] see Him through things [...] because He is indissolubly united to all things, and like the light, make all things visible.[76]

For Ghazālī, it appears, there is a higher level of certainty, which is not only the certainty attained through revelation, but also *maʿrifa*, or the experiential knowledge of God. I shall discuss this aspect in more detail in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Through the lens of both Ashʿarite occasionalism and a modified Aristotelianism, Ghazālī defends the rational possibility of the occurrence of miracles and the omnipotence of God. Thus, he affirms the epistemic superiority of revelation in attaining certainty on matters outside the scope of reason. Contrary to the popularised myth that Ghazālī was anti-philosophy and was the cause of the intellectual decline in Islam, he endorsed philosophy, but sought to tame it and bring it under the reign of revelation. His *Incoherence* was a critique of the Muslim philosophers, but not of philosophy per se. Unfortunately, it was misconstrued to mean an attack on philosophy.

As mentioned in this chapter, Ghazālī did not dismiss philosophy, but was critical of some aspects of its content, especially where it conflicted with the metaphysical world view of the Quran. His sceptical assault made us aware of the limitations of philosophy, and that one cannot assume it to bring us certainty on all matters. Philosophy cannot with apodictic certainty show the impossibility of miracles. However, it may show the rational *possibility* of the occurrence of miracles, but we need revelation for the certainty of their actual occurrence. Thus, there are metaphysical matters, such as the bodily resurrection, that fall outside the scope of philosophy, and which can only be clarified and affirmed through revelation.

Ghazālī's defence of revelation (*waḥy*) makes room for religious and moral praxis, which is the key to spiritual knowledge (*maʿrifa*). The quest for higher levels of certitude is inextricably linked to the moral life of Islam. Revelation (*waḥy*) and mystical cognition do not contradict philosophy but complement it by granting access to knowledge beyond the reach of reason. Access to the highest levels of certainty is not just a cerebral matter but requires action (*ʿamal*).[77] Ghazālī's scepticism of pure reason is an attempt to make the philosophers acknowledge a higher source of knowledge, namely, revelation (*waḥy*) and divine inspiration (*ilhām*). Like Immanuel Kant (d. 1804), Ghazālī laid bare that reason alone is not sufficient to acquire truth in all metaphysical matters. But unlike Kant, Ghazālī grounds reason in meta-rational sources of knowledge, including prophetic revelation (*waḥy*) and spiritual experience (*dhawq*), not empirical experience.

As an Ashʿarite theologian, Ghazālī straddled two polemical battles, one with the Ismāʿīlī Bāṭinites, defending the place of reason, and the other with the philosophers, defending the place of revelation. As a middle-roader, he sought to establish a balanced and holistic epistemology true to reason and the meta-rational sources of knowledge. He poignantly expresses this sentiment:

> How could right guidance be attained by one who is content with conforming to a tradition and a testimony and rejects the methods of investigation and theorisation? Does he not know that there is no basis for the divine teaching other than the statements of the master of mankind, and that his truthfulness in what he relates is established by a demonstration of the intellect? And how could one be guided to what is right if he confines himself to pure reason and does not illuminate his eyesight with the light of the revelation?[78]

In Ghazālī's autobiography, *The Deliverance from Error*, he remarks that the truth could not have escaped one of the four groups, the Mutakallimūn, the Bāṭinites, the Philosophers, or the Sufis. After investigating the path of the first three, he turned to probe into the way of the Sufis, and became convinced that they are people of states, not statements. They are people of action, not only words. Thus, in 1095 CE he resolved to leave Baghdad and embarked on a journey of the self, aimed at practice (*sulūk*) and spiritual experience (*dhawq*). The next chapter will examine Ghazālī's Sufi works to understand how he conceived the science of the path to the afterlife (*ʿilm ṭarīq al-ākhira*) and the way to certain knowledge (*ʿilm al-yaqīn*).

Notes

1 Fakhry, "Chapter Two: The Repudiation of Causality by al-Ghazāli," 57. Fakhry states that the Latin translation of the *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa, Logica et Philosophia Alghazalis Arabis* did not include the prologue, in which Ghazālī states that it is an exposition of Aristotelianism and that its refutation (*The Incoherence*) will follow it.

2 "Do they ascribe as partners those who created naught and are themselves created (Q. 7:191)"; "Say, 'Is there, among your partners, one who originates creation and then brings it back?' Say, 'God originates creation, then brings it back. How then are you perverted?' (Q. 10:34)"; "God it is Who created you; then causes you to die; then He gives you life. Is there anyone among those you ascribe as partners who does aught of that. Glory be to Him and exalted is He above the partners they ascribe (Q. 30:40)"; "Say, 'Have you considered your partners upon whom you call apart from God? Show me what they have created from the earth. Do they have a share in the heavens, or did We give them a book, such that they stand upon a clear proof from it? (Q. 35:40)"; "We pour down water in abundance; then we split the earth in fissures, and cause grains to grow therein, and vines and herbs, and olives and date palms, and gardens densely planted, and fruit and pastures, and sustenance for you and for your flocks (Q. 80:25–32)"; "God it is who created the heavens and the earth, and sent down water from the sky, then brought forth fruits thereby for your provision. He has made the ships subservient unto you, so that they sail upon the sea by His command, and has made the rivers subservient unto you (Q. 14:32)"; "His Command when he desires a thing is only to say to it "Be!" and it is (Q. 36:82)."

3 Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, 520–521.

4 Cited in and translated by Goodman, "Did Ghazālī Deny Causality?", 102.

5 Cited in and translated by Goodman, "Did Ghazālī Deny Causality?", 103.

6 Cited in Koca, *Islam, Causality, and Freedom: From the Medieval to the Modern Era*, 22.

7 Ibid., 31. The denial of causality predisposed the Ashʿarites to take up a theory of atomism which posits that the world consists of indivisible atoms. The number of atoms has to be finite, for the world to be finite, and hence God's knowledge to encompass the world. A body is composed of atoms and accidents constantly recreated spontaneously by God. Thus, effects are not created by an intrinsic nature of the bodies but through the divine will.

8 Cited in Ibid., 26.

9 Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Causality," 76.

10 Leaman, "Ghazālī and the Ashʿarites," 17. Slightly amended.

11 McGinnis, *Avicenna*, 193–194.

12 Ibid., 193.

13 Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Causality," 76.

14 Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing: A Parallel English-Arabic Text Translated, Introduced, and Annotated*, 31–32. In the *Healing,* Avicenna states: "[The possible in itself] must become necessary through a cause and with respect to it. For, if it were not necessary, then with the existence of the cause and with respect to it, it would [still] be possible. It would then be possible for it to exist or not to exist, being specified with neither of the two states. [Once again,] from the beginning this would be in need of the existence of a third thing through which either existence (as distinct from non-existence) or nonexistence (as distinct from existence) would be assigned for [the possible] when the cause of its existence with [this state of affairs] would not have been specified! This would be another cause, and the discussion would extend to an infinite regress. And, if it regresses infinitely, the existence of the possible, with all this, would not have been specified by it. As such, its existence would not have been realized. This is impossible, not only because this leads to an infinity of causes – for this is a dimension, the impossibility of which is still open to doubt in this place – but because no dimension has been arrived at through which its existence is specified, when it has been supposed to be existing. Hence, it has been shown to be true that whatever is possible in its existence does not exist unless rendered necessary with respect to its cause."

15 Ibid., 127.

16 Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, 7.

17 Marmura, "Al-Ghazālī on Bodily Resurrection and Causality in the Tahāfut and the Iqtiṣād."

18 Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, 46.

19 Yaqub, *Ghazālī's Moderation in Belief: al-Iqtiṣād fī al-iʿtiqād Translated with an Interpretive Essay and Notes*, 213.

20 Daiber, "God versus Causality: Al-Ghazālī's Solution and Its Historical Background," 3–4.

21 Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, 167.

22 Ibid., 168.

23 Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 30.

24 "They said, 'Burn him and avenge your gods, if you are going to do the right thing.' But We said, 'Fire be cool and safe for Abraham (Q. 21:68-69).'" Translation from Abdel Haleem, *The Quran*.

25 Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, 169.

26 Ghazālī's (this includes Ashʿarī) distancing himself from an extreme occasionalism is not a step in the direction of naturalism and a movement away from occasionalism, as Goodman (1978) would contend, but a moderate occasionalism which allows for a reliable natural science.

27 Adamson, "Al-Ghazālī, Causality, and Knowledge."

28 Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, 171.

29 Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 155.

30 Ibid.

31 The "problem of induction" highlights the lack of justification for our empirical knowledge. This problem stems from the assumption of the uniformity of nature (the sun will rise the next day) and the generalisation of a finite number of observations (all swans are white).

32 Giacaman and Bahlul, "Ghazali on Miracles and Necessary Connection," 50.

33 Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, 171.

34 Blake, "Al-Ghazālī on Possibility and the Critique of Causality," 40.

35 Adamson, "Al-Ghazālī, Causality, and Knowledge."

36 "Al-Ghazālī on Bodily Resurrection and Causality in the *Tahāfut* and the *Iqtiṣād.*" Marmura provides a comprehensive discussion of Ghazālī's occasionalism in the *Incoherence* and the *Moderation in Belief.*

37 In the *Moderation in Belief*, Ghazālī states: "As for that which is concomitant but not a condition, it is possible, from our perspective, for its conjunction with its concomitant to be broken. Rather, its concomitance is due to the habitual course of things, such as the burning of cotton when it is near fire and the feeling of cold in a hand when it touches ice. All of this is constant through the execution of God's plan. Otherwise, the divine power, in terms of its essence, is not incapable of creating coldness in the ice along with a sense of touch in the hand while at the same time creating in the hand the feeling of heat instead of cold [when it touches the ice]." Yaqub, *Ghazālī's Moderation in Belief: al-Iqtiṣād fī al-Iʿtiqād Translated with an Interpretive Essay and Notes*, 101.

38 In the *Moderation in Belief*, Ghazālī states: "Killing is severing the head, and it consists of modes that are the movements of the beheader's hand and of the sword, and of modes that are the separations of parts of the beheaded's neck. Another mode co-occurs with these modes – namely, death. If there is no correlation between the severing and death does not follow from supposing the absence of severing; for they are two things created together, co-occurring in accordance with the habitual course of things, but there is no correlation between one and the other. They are similar to co-occurring things that are not co-occurrent according to the habitual course of things." Ibid., 219–220.

39 Marmura, "Al-Ghazālī's Second Causal Theory in the 17th Discussion of His *Tahāfut*," 90.

40 Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 157.

41 Alon, "Al-Ghazālī on Causality," 404.

42 Marmura, "Al-Ghazālī on Bodily Resurrection and Causality in the *Tahāfut* and the *Iqtiṣād*," 274, 290.

43 Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, 174.

44 Halevi, "The Theologian's Doubts: Natural Philosophy and the Skeptical Games of Ghazālī," 32.

45 Ibid., 30.

46 Leaman, "Ghazālī and the Ashʿarites," 21.

47 Ibid.

48 Neither does his commitment to Ashʿarism take away from the fact that he was significantly influenced by Avicenna, as much recent scholarship has shown.

49 Heck, "Chapter 14: Skepticism in Classical Islam: The Case of Ghazali," 112.

50 Ghazālī states, "Let it be known that [our] objective is to alert those who think well of the philosophers and believe that their ways are free from contradiction by showing the [various] aspects of their incoherence." Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, 7.

51 Treiger, 94–95.

52 Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, 173.

53 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtiṣād fī al-Iʿtiqād*, 365.

54 Ibid., 366.

55 Ibid., 367.

56 As an Ashʿarite, the scope of what Ghazālī deems as possible for God may be assumed to be liberal. To the philosophers, Ghazālī has been assumed to make major concessions on this point. This discussion becomes particularly relevant to delineate what in the scripture we take literally, and what we interpret metaphorically. However, Ghazālī maintains

a similar stance to his Ashʿarite predecessors such as al-Juwayni and al-Baqillani, in that logical contradictions do not fall into part of the domain of God's power. In the final section of the seventeenth discussion, Ghazālī states that God has power over all possibilities but what is logically impossible is not within His power. He states that the impossible consists in "affirming a thing conjointly with denying it, affirming the more specific while denying the more general, or affirming two things while negating one [of them]. What does not reduce to this is not impossible, and what is not impossible is within [divine] power." Respectively, these three principles of impossibility would imply that it is impossible for God to create a person in two places at the same time; to create will without knowledge; and to transform different genera into one another, such as changing "blackness" into a cooking pot. Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, 175.

57 Ibid., 48.
58 Ibid., 9. Translation of Marmura adapted.
59 Ibid., 2–3.
60 According to Griffel, "The 'group' seems to be those who read the books of the *falāsifa* and were misguided by some of their ambiguities. It is clear that the accusations are levelled against contemporaries of al-Ghazāli […] The accusation of unbelief and *ilḥād* (most accurately translated as "heresy") is directed only against those who emulate the leading philosophers, and it is this group of *muqallidūn* who are falsely convinced that their leaders taught that religious laws are man-made. The leaders themselves, it is implied, did not come up with this particular teaching. Nevertheless, their teachings are not free from blame, since the errors, they made led others astray. In order to deal with the group of his contemporaries and to restrain their arrogant disregard for revealed religion, al-Ghazāli decided to address the teachings of the heads and leaders." Griffel, "Chapter 12: *Taqlīd* of the Philosophers: Al-Ghazāli's Initial Accusation in His *Tahāfut*," 285–286.
61 Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, 1–2.
62 Ibid., 4.
63 Ibid., 11.
64 Kukkonen, "Al-Ghazālī's Skepticism Revisited," 40.
65 Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, 223.
66 Ibid., 222. He states that, "[The question] to be examined, however, is concerned with the progress of these stages – whether it occurs purely through [divine] power, without mediation, or through some cause or another. Both [explanations], according to us, are *possible*" (emphasis added). According to Griffel, commenting on this paragraph, "All through his life al-Ghazālī remained ultimately undecided as to whether God creates mono-causally and arranges directly in each moment all elements of His creation, or whether God mediates His creative activity by means of secondary causes. Al-Ghazālī accepted both explanations as viable explanations of cosmology." Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 179. According to Marmura, commenting on the same paragraph, "he [Ghazālī] must mean that each viewed independently of the other is internally consistent […] [thus] each individually is possible." He further remarks that, "also another sense in which both these theories are possible for him, namely, that each individually represents a possible alternative answer to the philosophers' causal theory that rejects the possibility of certain kinds of miracles." Following this, Marmura states, "one must guard against the error of concluding that al-Ghazālī's position regarding the question of which of the two theories is true is therefore an agnostic

one." Marmura, "Al-Ghazālī's Second Causal Theory in the 17th Discussion of His Tahāfut," 97–98.

67 Campanini, *Al-Ghazali and the Divine*, 109.

68 Heck, "Chapter 14: Skepticism in Classical Islam: The Case of Ghazali," 196. Heck references Ghazālī's *The Loftiest Goal in Explaining the Meanings of God's Most-Beautiful Names* (*al-Maqsad al-asna fī sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*), where he says, "If you said: what is the endpoint of the knowledge of the knowers of God the Exalted [*nihāyat maʿrifat al-ʿārifīn bi-llāh taʿālā*]? We would say: the endpoint of the knowledge of the knowers is their inability to know [*ʿajzuhum ʿan al-maʿrifa*]. Their knowledge in truth is that they do not know him; that it is completely impossible to know him; that it is impossible that anyone but God the Mighty and Majestic know God with true knowledge encompassing the essence [*kunh*] of the attributes of lordship [*ṣifāt al-rubūbiyya*]. If that is disclosed to them by demonstrable proof [*inkishāf burhānī*], as we noted, they would know it, that is, they would reach the endpoint that it is possible for creation [humanity] to know. This is what the great righteous one Abū Bakr, God be pleased with him, meant when he said: 'The inability to grasp comprehension is a kind of comprehension,'" 203–204. See also, Heck, *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion*.

69 Heck, "Chapter 14: Skepticism in Classical Islam: The Case of Ghazali," 199.

70 Ibid.

71 Yaqub, *Ghazālī's Moderation in Belief: al-Iqtiṣād fī al-Iʿtiqād Translated with an Interpretive Essay and Notes*, 210. Emphasis added.

72 Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and Its Avicennian Foundation*, 94.

73 As discussed in Chapter 1, Ghazālī's experiential certitude came from the "light of prophecy," a reference to revelation (*waḥy*), which is the foundation to trans-rational knowledge and spiritual practice.

74 Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 102. Emphasis added.

75 Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, 106.

76 Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt al-anwār): A Parallel English-Arabic text Translated, Introduced and Annotated*, 24. Translation by Fakhry in "Chapter Two: The Repudiation of Causality by al-Ghazali," 64–65.

77 Also, we have shown in the previous chapter, through the certainty attained from philosophical reason, sound action follows, leading to spiritual ascent. Thus, in Chapter 4, we aim to show the inextricable relationship between action (*ʿamal*) and knowledge (*ʿilm*) in Ghazālī's epistemology.

78 Yaqub, *Ghazālī's Moderation in Belief: al-Iqtiṣād fī al-Iʿtiqād Translated with an Interpretive Essay and Notes*, 3.

Bibliography

Abdel Haleem, M. A. S. *The Quran*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Abrahamov, Binyamin. "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Causality." *Studia Islamica*, no. 67 (1988): 75–98.

Adamson, Peter. "Al-Ghazālī, Causality, and Knowledge." Conference paper, Twentieth World Conference of Philosophy. Medieval Philosophy. Boston, 10–15 August 1998. www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Medi/MediAdam.htm.

Alon, Ilai. "Al-Ghazālī on Causality." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 100, no. 4 (1980): 397–405.

Avicenna. *The Metaphysics of the Healing: A Parallel English-Arabic Text Translated, Introduced, and Annotated*. Translated by Michael Marmura. Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2005.

Blake, D. Dutton. "Al-Ghazālī on Possibility and the Critique of Causality." *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 10, no. 1 (2001): 23–46.

Campanini, Massimo. *Al-Ghazali and the Divine*. New York: Routledge, 2019.

Daiber, Hans. "God versus Causality: Al-Ghazālī's Solution and its Historical Background." In *Islam and Rationality: The Impact of Al-Ghazālī*, edited by Georges Tamer, 1–22. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015.

Fakhry, Majid. "Chapter Two: The Repudiation of Causality by al-Ghazāli." In *Islamic Occasionalism and Its Critique by Averroes and Aquinas*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1958.

Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *al-Iqtiṣād fī al-Iʿtiqād*. Beirut: Dār al-Minhāj, 2019.

———. *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*. Translated by Richard J. McCarthy. Boston: University of Beirut, 1980.

———. *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*. Translated by Michael Marmura. Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2000.

———. *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt al-anwār): A Parallel English-Arabic Text Translated, Introduced and Annotated*. Translated by David Buchman. Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1998.

Giacaman, George, and Raja Bahlul. "Ghazali on Miracles and Necessary Connection." *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 9, no. 1 (2001): 39–50.

Goodman, Lenn Evvan. "Did Ghazālī Deny Causality?" *Studia Islamica*, no. 47 (1978): 83–120.

Griffel, Frank. *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

———. "Chapter 12: *Taqlīd* of the Philosophers: Al-Ghazāli's Initial Accusation in His *Tahāfut*." In *Ideas, Images, and Methods of Portrayal*, 58: 273–296. Leiden: Brill, 2005.

Halevi, Leor. "The Theologian's Doubts: Natural Philosophy and the Skeptical Games of Ghazālī." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63, no. 1 (2002): 19–39.

Heck, Paul. *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion*. London and New York: Routledge, 2014.

Heck, Paul L. "Chapter 14: Skepticism in Classical Islam: The Case of Ghazali." In *Skepticism: From Antiquity to the Present*, edited by Diego E. Machuca and Baron Reed, 196–208. Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.

Koca, Özgür. *Islam, Causality, and Freedom: From the Medieval to the Modern Era*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Kukkonen, Taneli. "Al-Ghazālī's Skepticism Revisited." In *Rethinking the History of Skepticism*, edited by Henrik Lagurlund, 29–59. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010.

Leaman, Oliver. "Ghazālī and the Ashʿarites." *Asian Philosophy* 6, no. 1 (1996): 17–27.

Marmura, Michael. "Al-Ghazālī on Bodily Resurrection and Causality in the *Tahāfut* and the *Iqtiṣād*." In *Probing in Islamic Philosophy: Studies in Al-Ghazālī and Other Major Muslim Thinkers*, 273–299. New York: Global Academic, 2005.

———. "Al-Ghazālī's Second Causal Theory in the 17th Discussion of His *Tahāfut*." In *Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism*, edited by Parviz Morewedge, 85–112. New York: Caravan Books, 1981.

McGinnis, Jon. *Avicenna*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Three Muslim Sages*. New York: Caravan Books, 1964.

Treiger, Alexander. *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and its Avicennian Foundation*. London and New York: Routledge, 2012.

Wolfson, Harry Austryn. *The Philosophy of the Kalam*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1976.

Yaqub, Aladdin M. *Ghazālī's Moderation in Belief: al-Iqtiṣād fī al-Iʿtiqād translated with an interpretive essay and notes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

4 Certainty within the Sufi tradition

In Chapter 1, we introduced Ghazālī's quest for the foundations of knowledge. Chapter 2 and 3 dealt with acquired knowledge in relation to philosophical demonstration. In this chapter, we discuss the role of direct knowledge in the context of Sufism. These three components – the foundational, the philosophical, and the experiential Sufi knowledge – form our construction of Ghazālī's epistemology. In early Ghazālian scholarship, it was assumed that Ghazālī was the implacable adversary of philosophy and a consummate follower of Sufism. This happened to the extent that he has taken the sole blame for the "intellectual decline" of the Muslim world. In recent scholarship, the tide has turned, with an emphasis on the philosophical influence on Ghazālī. However, this has at times undermined Ghazālī's commitment to Sunni orthodoxy and Sufism. In this chapter, we show the place of Sufism as the means to certainty in Ghazālī's epistemology. Furthermore, the chapter will touch upon his integration of philosophical elements into his Sufi works. Thus, we attempt to show a middle ground, that his philosophical inclination does not exclude his Sufi inclination, and his Sufi inclination does not exclude his philosophical inclination. Ghazālī adopted philosophical elements and paradigms and integrated them into a Sufi world view. He was wary of certain Greek metaphysical concepts that contradicted the Islamic metaphysics of the Quran, but he employed the philosophical language to explicate the Sufi experience, which otherwise, is generally incommunicable.

We open this chapter discussing Ghazālī's second crisis, the so-called spiritual crisis, and his epistemic quest to taste (*dhawq*) a part of prophecy, or the stage of knowing beyond the intellect. The highest object of knowledge in Ghazālī's epistemology, and the telos of man, is to know God. Thus, we follow with a discussion of the paths to the knowledge of God, and the scope of our ability to truly know Him. Thereafter, we introduce Ghazālī's life project, the revival of the "science of the path to the hereafter" (*ʿilm ṭarīq al-ākhira*), and its twin components: the "knowledge of praxis" (*ʿilm al-muʿāmala*) and the "knowledge of unveiling" (*ʿilm al-mukāshafa*). Finally, as part of the knowledge of unveiling, and the apex of certainty, we discuss his Sufi ontology of oneness, and the concomitant attributes of the people who attain this level of certainty. Thereafter, we conclude the discussion

by looking at the parallels between Ghazālī's theory of certainty and the Quranic triad of certainty.

The second crisis and the quest for prophetic knowledge

Ghazālī studied the works of the great masters of Sufism, namely, Abū Tālib al-Makkī (d. 988), al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 857), al-Qushayrī (d. 1072), Junayd al-Baghdadi (d. 910), Abū Bakr Al-Shiblī (d.946), Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmi (d. 874), and others. However, he soon came to accept that they are not people of statements (*aqwāl*) but people of states (*aḥwāl*). He understood that he could only truly know the Sufi tradition through practice (*sulūk*) and spiritual experience (*dhawq*). Through the patronage of the vizier of the Seljuk dynasty, Niẓām al-Mulk (d.1092), Ghazālī held a prestigious appointment at the Niẓāmiyya madrasa in Baghdad, teaching and instructing 300 students. Holding this position, he was the recipient of fame and fortune. In Ghazālī's autobiography, he admits to being motivated by fame and prestige, not sincerity to God. He states, "I became certain that I was on the brink of a crumbling bank and already on the verge of falling into the Fire, unless I set about mending my ways."[1] For almost six months, he ceaselessly vacillated between the world and the hereafter, between his prestigious position and shunning his attachments to the world. Eventually, the decision was made for him by God. He became tongue-tied, and unable to teach. This impediment further led to a state of deep sadness (melancholy), an inability to consume food or drink, and eventual weakness in the body. He narrates that the physicians could not help him, but advised that it was a matter of the heart, not a physiological ailment.

In 1095 CE, after turning to God in sincere prayer, Ghazālī eventually resolved to turn his heart away from the lure of the world, dismiss his fame and distance himself from his social relations. He left Baghdad to live a Sufi life committed to seclusion, the purification of his soul, the cultivation of virtues and remembrance of God. In this condition he remained for a period of 11 years. This second crisis, the pull Ghazālī experienced between this world and the hereafter, is often described as his spiritual crisis. I would argue that it is very much an epistemological crisis as well, in the sense that Ghazālī sought experiential surety of the way of the Sufis, or otherwise put, he wished to taste (*dhawq*) or experience a part of prophecy. The proof of the prophetic faculty is to experience a stage of knowing beyond the intellect. According to Tobias Mayer, a close reading of *The Deliverance from Error*

> suggests that Ghazālī in part attributed his own insincerity in practicing Islam to lingering uncertainty about the reality of prophethood […] In other words, a crisis which *prima facie* sprang from a problem of religious ethics was diagnosed by Ghazālī as rooted in an even deeper issue of epistemology.[2]

Thus, besides Sufism's soteriological role, it plays the function of an affirmation of the reality of the prophetic faculty.

Ghazālī was never doubtful of prophecy, but sought a higher station of affirming it, the station of taste (*dhawq*). In his path of renunciation, he experienced and

confirmed to himself two things, the superiority of Sufi practice and the possibility of a "faculty beyond reason," the prophetic faculty. He states in *The Deliverance*, "I knew with certainty that the Sufis are those who uniquely follow the way to God Most High, their mode of life is the best of all, their way the most direct of ways, and their ethic the purest."[3] He says that the way of the Sufis is "learned from the niche of prophecy. And beyond the light of prophecy there is no light on earth from which illumination can be obtained."[4] Considering that Ghazālī was accused of the doctrine of acquisition of prophethood (*iktisāb al-nubūwa*), and a follower of the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ), he aimed to unambiguously state his position in *The Deliverance*.[5] He equates the states of the Sufis only to the early stages of prophetic experience such as Muhammad's (ṣ) spiritual state in the Cave of Ḥirā prior to divine revelation (*waḥy*).[6] Thus, the Sufis may experience a property of prophecy but not prophecy itself; it cannot be acquired, it is exclusive to whom God has chosen, a privilege which ended with Muhammad (ṣ).

According to Ghazālī, the states of the Sufis, or quasi-prophetic experience, can be known through various degrees of knowledge. These mystical states can either be known through hearing about the spiritual experiences of others or through acquaintance by accompanying such saintly men.[7] He also states that it can be known through the evidence of revelation[8] and numerous prophetic traditions.[9] He argues that the demonstrative proof of this reality consists of two parts. Firstly, there is the reality of a true dream vision, through which unveiling of the unknown occurs.[10] He remarks that if this can take place in a dream state, it can happen in a wakeful state too. This is a small taste of the character of the prophetic faculty. It is interesting to note that the dream state during Ghazālī's sceptical crisis acted as a source of doubt (see Chapter 1), but later in *The Deliverance*, we read that it acts as a source of certainty.[11] Secondly, the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) spoke truly about the unknown and the future, and by extension it is possible that saints (*awliyāʾ*) can know the nature of reality through spiritual disclosure (*ilhām*).[12] Beyond demonstrative proof, he states that the highest level of affirming the reality of a "state above reason," is through fruitional experience. Those who choose to walk the path of Sufism (*taṣawwuf*), and taste the nature of divine inspiration (*ilhāmʾ*) will know this with absolute certainty.

Ghazālī states that humankind has been given the faculty of sense perception, then the faculty of discernment (*al-tamyīz*), and the faculty of the intellect (*al-ʿaql*). He continues stating that a higher faculty exists, a faculty that allows for the perception of the hidden, the future, and other realities inaccessible to the intellect.[13] Invoking his favourite argument against the detractors, he states that if you cannot perceive it, that does not mean it does not exist. Ghazālī remarks that if a man born blind never heard of the notion of colours, and was suddenly told about them, he would reject their existence. In the case of the prophetic faculty, we can affirm it by way of revelation, prophetic traditions, dreams, testimony, the circumstances accompanying saintly company, and finally through actual experience (*dhawq*). He states that in the same way that the intellect can perceive intelligibles which the senses cannot perceive, the prophetic faculty is like "an 'eye' possessed of light, and in its light the unknown and other phenomena not normally perceived by the

intellect become visible."[14] Thus, one of the properties of prophecy is the acquisition of knowledge outside the bounds of reason. The absolute certainty of some of the properties of prophecy is attained through treading the path of Sufism.[15]

Although Ghazālī defends the possibility and the actual occurrence of miracles, he is not in favour of their epistemic value in affirming prophecy. He states that one can easily assume them to be a case of magic or trickery. They do not give certain knowledge of prophecy. He does not dismiss them, though, but regards them as a minor proof among a wider and stronger arsenal of proofs. He much prefers, over miracles, the study of the Quran and the prophetic way of life. He states that with rigorous acquaintance, you will come to know with necessary knowledge that Muhammad (ṣ) was a prophet of God. But, in addition to study, he states that the practice of the prescribed acts of worship, and its effects on the soul, provides another layer of certainty. He states that many such experiences pertaining to study and practice provide an indisputable knowledge of the reality of prophecy. However, he concludes that a superior form of knowing this reality is through taste (*dhawq*), through actual witnessing (*mushāhada*), attainable only through the path of Sufism.

The above discussion is mainly taken from *The Deliverance* and glossed from *The Marvels of the Heart*. Ghazālī is generally consistent in other texts on this discussion, particularly his *The Niche of Lights*. It is a text that represents the cream of Ghazālī's esoteric teachings. In the second chapter, he discusses the five spirits of the human soul.[16] The first is the sensible spirit (*al-rūḥ al-ḥassās*), which receives data from the senses. The second is the imaginative spirit (*al-rūḥ al-khayālī*), which stores the impressions of the senses, to be used when the rational spirit requires them. The third is the rational spirit (*rūḥ al-ʿaqlī*), which allows the human to perceive meanings beyond the senses and the imagination. Through it, the universal necessary truths are known. The fourth is the reflective spirit (*rūḥ al-fikrī*), which takes rational propositions and produces new knowledge through syllogistic reasoning.[17] Finally, the fifth spirit is the sacred prophetic spirit (*rūḥ al-qudsī al-nabawī*), reserved for the prophets and saints (*awliyāʾ*). Ghazālī states that:

> Within it are disclosed flashes of the unseen, the properties of the next world, and some of the knowledge of the dominion of the heavens and the earth, or, rather, some of the lordly knowledge that the rational and reflective spirits cannot reach.[18]

This is a categorical statement that the prophetic spirit provides knowledge not accessible to both the rational and the reflective spirit. He further discusses this point, stating:

> For it is not unlikely – O you who cling to the world of the rational faculty – there is another stage beyond the rational faculty within which there becomes manifest that which does not become manifest to the rational faculty. In the same way, it is not unlikely that the rational is a stage that lies beyond discrimination

and sensation, within which marvels and wonders are unveiled that sensation and discrimination cannot reach.[19]

Ghazālī describes this "stage beyond the rational faculty" (i.e. the sacred prophetic faculty) as taste (*dhawq*), or mystical experience, not accessible to all, a special privilege given to prophets and the friends of God (*awliyāʾ*) only. He remarks that the individual who has attained tasting (*dhawq*) shares in the states of the prophets.[20] Ghazālī thus encourages pursuing this special privilege through acquiring a portion of that spirit, for tasting is superior to reason and imitation. He states that "knowledge is above faith, and tasting is above knowledge, [this] because tasting is a finding, but knowing is drawing of analogies, and having faith is a mere acceptance through imitation."[21] He specifically asserts that taste (*dhawq*) is not intellectual,[22] and that if all rational thinkers were to come together to explain the meaning of taste (*dhawq*), they would fail.[23]

Ghazālī compares the five spirits of the human soul to light in that they make existent things apparent, each level providing a different manifestation of reality.[24] In Ghazālī's discussion of "the light verse,"[25] he compares the sensible spirit to the niche, the imaginal spirit to the glass, the rational spirit to the lamp, the reflective spirit to the tree, and the sacred prophetic spirit to the olive oil. He remarks that these lights are ranked above each other, and thus the verse refers to it as "light upon light." Ghazālī states that when the sacred prophetic spirit is the purest and most noble, it is ascribed to the saints (*awliyāʾ*) and prophets. Through the sacred prophetic spirit, God's light is perceived with utmost clarity. Following this, he divides the reflective spirit into two parts, a part that requires instruction and assistance from the outside, and another part which is of such intense purity and preparedness that it requires no assistance from the outside. Thus, because of its purity, and independence from assistance, it is referred to in the "light verse" by the words: "its oil would well-nigh shine forth, even if no fire touched it (Q. 24:35)." The latter part is a reference to the sacred prophetic spirit, and is essentially "a component of," but graded higher than the reflective spirit. It is a component in the sense that the mirror of the heart (*qalb*), otherwise termed the intellect (*ʿaql*), is the locus and can receive knowledge via two means, through learning or direct unveiling.[26] It is intellectual because intelligibles are received and it is a component of the reflective spirit, but it is non-intellectual in the sense that it receives knowledge directly without intellectual effort (i.e. mystical cognition). Also, a Sufi may be bestowed with the gift of knowledge through *dhawq*, and if he is able to, can express that knowledge intellectually. This way, *dhawq* becomes intellectual, but in its original constitution it is not intellectual.

Binyamin Abrahamov shows the Avicennian and Farabian influence on Ghazālī's discussion of the sacred prophetic spirit. He states that the sacred prophetic spirit, and the idea of *dhawq*, is actually intellectual, and refers to it as intuition (*ḥads*), or the faculty of immediate perception.[27] Abrahamov reads into the text that Ghazālī views the sacred prophetic faculty as an extraordinary intellectual faculty. We have taken a different interpretation in our discussion above. Consistent with *The Deliverance*, we maintain that *dhawq* is non-intellectual, and refers to mystical

experience. Ghazālī does not subscribe to the understanding that *dhawq* is the instantaneous reception of the middle term of a syllogism, that is, intuition (*ḥads*). Thus, the quality of the sacred prophetic faculty is not a disposition of genius but a purity of soul. According to Jules Janssens, "Such a perspective [Avicennian] is of course foreign to Ghazālī. For him God is the direct source of prophetic inspiration and no learned man, not even the cleverest among them, can know the secrets of prophetic knowledge."[28] A close reading of the text shows the undeniable influence of Avicenna. However, it does not mean that Ghazālī did not recast it to fit his own purpose and epistemological framework.[29] Ghazālī did not just replace philosophical terminology with Sufi terminology as Abrahamov suggests, but creatively drew on the philosophical tradition, integrating it within his Sufi framework.

Deliberation on The Deliverance from Error

The Deliverance is an explicit text, leaving no room to doubt Ghazālī's stance on matters. However, Ghazālī's personal narrative in *The Deliverance* may be challenged because of the stock tropes he employs and the apologetic motive of the text. In *The Deliverance,* he remarks that the truth could not have escaped one of the four groups, the Mutakallimūn, the Bāṭinites, the Philosophers, or the Sufis. Thus, he sought to investigate these paths, and eventually accepted Sufism as the superior means to acquiring certainty. According to Josef van Ess, this is a trope previously used by his contemporary ʿUmar Khayyām (d. 1131).[30] Another trope is the search for a criterion of truth borrowed from al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 857).[31] Menn presents a convincing argument that Ghazālī's self-presentation (adapted to his own life and ideas) in *The Deliverance* follows the model of Galen's (d. 129) self-presentation.[32] There are parallels between them on the themes of uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*), critical examination of various groups, the establishing of a criterion of truth, and scepticism of the fundamental sources of knowledge. Thus, in a similar vein to Galen's autobiographical works, Ghazālī models his *Deliverance* to establish his religious authority and presents Sufism as the most convincing alternative to other claims to attaining certainty.[33] However, Ghazālī goes further than Galen, and establishes the authority of meta-rational sources of knowledge, such as prophecy (*waḥy*) and spiritual unveiling (*kashf*). Also, like a money changer,[34] he attempts to show that he has the competence and authority to appropriate the ideas of the philosophers into a traditional Sunni framework, without making *taqlīd* of the philosophers and accepting, what in his view are, their false conclusions.[35] Thus, like Galen's autobiographical works, *The Deliverance* aims to establish Ghazālī as an authority (not bound by *taqlīd*) that can sift through the various groups and endorse the best approach to attaining certainty. Although Ghazālī models his self-presentation on Galen, this does not subvert its historical accuracy. His autobiographical framework is loosely similar, but his content is different. It is illogical to presume that his text is misleading, just because he borrowed tropes from Khayyām and Al-Muḥāsibī. Intertextuality is inevitable. All authors are influenced by texts that they have read in their lifetime, and that influence is woven into their writings, consciously or unconsciously. Thus, Ghazālī's

methodological scepticism and personal quest for the foundations of knowledge are authentically his. He may have been inspired by the rhetorical strategies of others, but did not imitate them blindly.

The second concern regarding *The Deliverance* is its apologetic elements. In 1106 CE, upon Ghazālī's return to teaching in Nīshāpūr, he was accused of holding, among other ideas, philosophical and Ismāʿīlī Shiʿī ideas.[36] Thus, van Ess argues that *The Deliverance* is an apologetic work, not an autobiography.[37] To be sure, it is not an autobiographical work in the conventional sense of the word. Ghazālī does not provide the meticulous details of a modern autobiography. It is more accurate to call it an intellectual autobiography. I would concede that *The Deliverance* is an apologetic work, but that does not undermine the veracity of the author's ideas or life. Viewing *The Deliverance* as an apologetic work, and reading other biographical sources, like the Persian letters, provides fresh insight into the life of Ghazālī. But that in itself does not render *The Deliverance* as an inauthentic source, or that his epistemological crisis, his spiritual crisis, and his quest for certainty are false narratives.[38] In an apologetic manner, Ghazālī distances himself somewhat from philosophy, but at the same time acknowledges its value to some extent. Recent scholarship has demonstrated that Ghazālī was influenced by philosophy and appropriated it into his works, including *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*. However, a rereading of *The Deliverance* in light of the apologetic elements should not necessarily undermine Ghazālī's stated commitment to Sufism as a superior means to certainty. *The Revival* is predominantly a work of Sufism, which is in itself the "science of the path to the hereafter" (ʿilm ṭarīq al-ākhira). However, not all of its content is a result of inspiration, and much of it is a conscious appropriation of Greek philosophical elements, including the tripartite division of the soul and the principle of habituation of virtue.

Thus, Ghazālī's "conversion" does not mean the abandonment of philosophy as a mode of expression. His later works have elements of philosophical thought. And before his conversion, he already had knowledge of, and an innate inclination for Sufi teachings. During his student years in Nīshāpūr, he received tutelage from the Sufi master Abū ʿAlī al-Fārmadhī (d. 1084), a direct disciple of Al-Qushayrī (d. 1072). Ghazālī's student, the Andalusī Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 1148), attested to the fact that Ghazālī practiced Sufism at least two years before his departure from Baghdad.[39] Ghazālī had been consistent at a theoretical level, but intensified his ethical and spiritual practice later in his life. This included his desire to write works on ethical praxis (muʿāmala) and the attainment of felicity (saʿāda). His ethical treatise, *The Scale of Action* (Mīzān al-ʿamal), most likely written in early 1095 CE, the year of his departure from Baghdad, supports Sufism. It is his intellectual attempt to convince himself that Sufism is the path to take to attain certainty. All he needed was to put it into practice. In *The Scale of Action*, he gives us a biographical hint of the Sufi Shaykh who advised him to depart from his position and his city. He took the advice early that year, as that was the year of his spiritual crisis, and he was desperate to cure himself of his painful spiritual/existential state that resulted in medical maladies that could not be cured by a physician. He needed a spiritual mentor. Thus, he left Baghdad in 1095 CE, and undertook the spiritual path, and this

resulted in his magnum opus, *The Revival.* This is a classic for all times. It provides a detailed blueprint for the purification of the self. This purification is the key to the experiential knowledge of God, and the key to the attainment of felicity (*saʿāda*).

The path to the knowledge of God and our inability to truly know Him

In Ghazālī's epistemology, the highest object of knowledge is to know God, his attributes and acts. It is man's ultimate goal. There are two ways to know God, either through discursive knowledge or the Sufi path. In the first chapter, referencing *The Marvels of the Hearts,* the 22nd book of the *Revival,* we discussed that the heart acts as a mirror. It can either receive knowledge of the reality of things through the door of direct unveiling (*mukāshafa*) or the door of acquired knowledge. In the former case, the veil between the heart and the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*) is removed, and knowledge gushes forth into the heart. In the latter case, the external senses transmit knowledge from the phenomenal world as a representation in the heart. The Sufis focus on the purification and polishing of the heart to receive knowledge directly, whereas the learned (*ḥukamāʾ*) focus on the acquisition of knowledge indirectly via the external senses.[40]

In *The Scale of Action,* an earlier work than *The Marvels,* Ghazālī discusses these two paths to knowledge of God, that of the Sufis and of the theoreticians (*nuẓār*).[41] He regards both paths as legitimate. He remarks that both groups advocate the removal of vices from the soul, but differ in their approach to knowledge. He states that the Sufis do not focus on learning the sciences, but on removing the blameworthy characteristics of the soul, detachment from the world, polishing the soul, and drawing close to God through constant remembrance of Him (*dhikr*). Eventually, through God's grace alone, divine unveiling (*mukāshafa*) and inspiration (*ilhām*) occur, providing perfect knowledge and disclosure of the realities. He describes this incident as a flash of lightning, with intermittent occurrences either remaining for a short or a long period. This path is commensurate with the way of the saints and prophets.

On the other hand, the theoreticians (*nuẓār*) gain knowledge through inference via the senses, which connect to the material world. Ghazālī states that the theoreticians do not deny the path of the Sufis but regard it as arduous and unlikely to attain the desired end. They also state that detachment from the world is not easy and the strenuous effort of the path may lead to a corruption of the temperament, melancholy, the confusion of the mind, and bodily illness.[42] Ghazālī also states that if the Sufi is not trained in the rational sciences, his soul may be diverted by corrupt imaginary thoughts (*khawāṭir*) which he mistakes as realities. He remarks that the path of Sufism could take a decade or more because of such illusions. However, if he studied the rational sciences *prior* to pursuing the path of Sufism, he would not be taken in by such erroneous thoughts. Ghazālī thus advises studying his primer on philosophical logic, *The Criterion of Knowledge* (*Miʿyār al-ʿilm*), providing the spiritual seeker with the necessary intellectual tools to attain his desired goal. He remarks that it is a reliable means by which one can attain knowledge of the self, and by extension, knowledge of God.

Ghazālī is indeed a realist, and does not wish his spiritual companions to seek endlessly with no outcome. He advises his companions not to compare themselves with the Prophet (ṣ), for he received knowledge of the self instantaneously, without intellectual effort.[43] Thus, he instructs the spiritual wayfarer to study the rational sciences first, and thereafter pursue the Sufi path. This approach is more likely to achieve the desired outcomes than the Sufi path alone, void of philosophical training.

Ghazālī presents the following anecdote to help understand the difference between the two groups, the learned and the Sufis:

> The story is told that once the Chinese and the Byzantines (Rūm) vied with one another before a certain king as to the beauty of their workmanship in decorating and painting. So the king decided to give over to them a portico so that the Chinese might decorate one side of it and the Byzantines the other side; and to let a curtain hang down between them so as to prevent either group from looking at the other. And he did so. The Byzantines gathered together countless strange colours, but the Chinese entered without any colour at all and began to polish their side and to brighten it. When the Byzantines had finished, the Chinese claimed that they had finished also. The king was astonished at their statement and the way in which they had finished the decorating without any colour at all. So they were asked, "How have you finished the work without any colour?" They replied, "You are not responsible for us; lift the veil." So they lifted it, and behold on their side there shone forth the wonders of the Byzantine skill with added illumination and dazzling brilliance, since that side had become like unto a polished mirror by reason of much furbishing. Thus the beauty of their side was increased by its added clearness. The care of the saints in cleansing, polishing, and clarifying the heart until the true nature of the Real shines forth clearly therein with utmost illumination is like the work of the Chinese. The care of the learned and the philosophers in acquiring and adorning knowledge, and the representation of this adornment in the heart are like the work of the Byzantine.[44]

From the above anecdote, it is evident that Ghazālī deems the method of the Sufis as a superior path to truth. Philosophy is a reliable approach to gaining knowledge, whereby the soul is engraved with the nature of reality either through empirical inference or theoretical abstraction. However, Sufism reflects the nature of reality with greater lustre, brilliance, and certainty. Another approach to reading this anecdote is through the lens of the above discussion, where Ghazālī advises pursuing the Sufi path with *prior* philosophical training, and thus preventing some of the drawbacks that occur without such training.

In the following section of *The Scale*, Ghazālī provides explicit remarks as to the better of the two paths, tailoring his advice to the seeker himself, as opposed to the absolutism of one path or another. He advises the elderly to focus on action, the path of Sufism. He states that for the elderly to acquire and imbibe the rational sciences in their soul is a difficult task. He counsels that they should learn only

what is necessary to act. He gives the same advice to those who are young, and do not possess the intellectual acumen to pursue the rational sciences. In the case of someone who is intellectually disposed to the sciences but where there are not competent and independent (non-imitative) teachers available, he should also focus on action and practical knowledge alone.

Ideally, in the case of a person who is young, endowed with intelligence, and has access to an independent scholar, he is fit to pursue both paths. He repeats in this discussion that the student should *first* study the demonstrative sciences, build up a degree of mastery in them, and then commit himself to the Sufi path, solely focusing on solitude, detachment, and remembrance of God. He hints that he is going against the grain of conventional advice when he states that, "this is what I think, but the true knowledge is with God, who knows best. What seems correct to most people is to be preoccupied with action."[45]

Ghazālī presents a synthesis, recommending prerequisite training in the philosophical sciences prior to ascetic practices. In most cases, he recommends solely focusing on the Sufi path, even though attaining its end is far-fetched for many. However, if the right circumstances present themselves, the seeker should first study the philosophical sciences and then pursue the path of Sufism. The path of Sufism, although a long and arduous journey, provides greater certainty of realities than rational pursuits alone. Garden states that "combining the two would create a method that joins the surety of rational investigation to the superior quality of mystical insight."[46] This integrative approach seems to be the blueprint Ghazālī modelled his own pursuit for certainty on. He describes himself in *The Deliverance* as an intellectually inquisitive student who, from a young age, liberated himself from the yoke of uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*). He mastered the rational sciences under the tutelage of Juwaynī in Nīshāpūr, and embarked on his spiritual sojourn in 1095 CE, leaving behind his prestigious appointment at the Niẓāmīyya madrasa in Baghdad. *The Scale* is an early work he wrote prior to *The Revival*, but soon after his departure from Baghdad.[47] Thus, when he wrote *The Scale* he was already practicing Sufism.[48] This integrative approach is present in both works, written after he embarked on the path of Sufism. The Ghazālī in these two earlier works looks more favourably on philosophical training than in *The Deliverance*, and advocates for philosophical study prior to the Sufi path. However, he is consistent in regarding the Sufi path as a means to greater certainty.

In *The Marvels,* Ghazālī produces an additional metaphor expressing the difference between the two doors of knowing, divine inspiration (*ilhām*) and reason:

So whenever the veils are lifted between the heart and the Preserved Tablet, the heart sees the things which are therein, and knowledge bursts forth into it therefrom, so that it does not have to acquire its knowledge through the avenues of the senses. This is like the bursting forth of water from the depths of the earth. Whenever the heart becomes occupied with things in the imagination derived from sensibles (*maḥsūsāt*), this veils it from examining the Preserved Tablet, just as when water is collected from streams [into a reservoir]; it is thereby prevented from bursting forth from the earth.[49]

Expressed differently, he states in *The Alchemy of Happiness* (*Kīmiyā al-saʿādat*) a Persian abridgement of *The Revival* (*Iḥyā*):

> Besides mere incapacity [to know the essence of God], there are other hindrances to the attainment of spiritual truth. One of these is externally acquired knowledge. To use a figure, the heart may be represented as a well, and the five senses as five streams which are continually conveying water to it. In order to find out the real contents of the heart these streams must be stopped for a time, at any rate, and the refuse they have brought with them must be cleared out of the well. In other words, if we are to arrive at pure spiritual truth, we must put away, for the time knowledge which has been acquired by external processes and which too often hardens into dogmatic prejudice.[50]

The streams of water represent the way of the philosophers, and the bursting forth of pure water from the depths of the ground represents the way of the prophets and saints. The knowledge of the prophets and the saints is connected to the unseen world (ʿālam al-ghayb) through the interior of the heart, whereas the knowledge of the philosophers and the learned is connected to the material world (ʿālam al-shahāda) through the senses.[51] The door which receives knowledge through direct unveiling is connected to the Preserved Tablet and the angelic realm. The other door acquires knowledge through the senses, and is tethered to the material world.[52] The Preserved Tablet contains all of the realities of the physical and the metaphysical world. Direct access to the Preserved Tablet through spiritual unveiling provides greater certainty and clarity of the nature of things. Ghazālī states that the material world is a resemblance of the unseen world, but not an actual reflection of it.[53] Thus, if the heart is tethered to the senses, knowledge is diluted and not like that of the purity and abundance of direct unveiling. Through the metaphor of the dam, Ghazālī clearly advocates for the path of Sufism as the best means to know God and attain felicity in the hereafter.

In *The Alchemy of Happiness*, Ghazālī states that knowledge of the self is a crucial step to the knowledge of God. He invokes the classical Arabic maxim (which is commonly attributed to the Prophet (ṣ)): "He who knows himself knows God." He also adduces support from a Quranic verse, "We shall show them Our signs upon the horizons and within themselves till it becomes clear to them that it is the truth (Q. 41:53)." Ghazālī states that man is a microcosm of the world. Thus, he advises those who seek intimate knowledge of the Creator to contemplate their own bodies, for through studying that, the power, wisdom, and love of the Creator is known. However, he states that, "when all is said, the knowledge of the soul plays a more important part in leading to the knowledge of God than the knowledge of our body and the functions."[54] After a discussion of the elements of what knowledge of the self means, he states that "an exact philosophical knowledge of the spirit is not a necessary preliminary to walking in the path of religion, but comes rather as the result of self-discipline and perseverance in that path."[55] He further remarks that through moral discipline, the heart is purified from the rust of blameworthy traits, and the light of God is reflected. He states that the unveiling of the heart to the

unseen provides similar conditions to that of prophetic inspiration, and that divine intuition (*ilhām*) is not confined to the prophets alone.

In *The Alchemy,* following the metaphor of the well and the five streams, Ghazālī chastises those who dismiss other types of knowledge (i.e. the rational sciences) on the basis of hearing such dismissals from their Sufi teachers. He states:

> This is as if a person who was not an adept in alchemy were to go about saying, "Alchemy is better than gold," and were to refuse gold when it was offered to him. Alchemy is better than gold, but real alchemists are very rare, and so are real Sufis. He who has a mere smattering of Sufism is not superior to a learned man, any more than he who has tried a few experiments in alchemy has ground for despising a rich man.[56]

This paragraph is consistent with Ghazālī's discussion in *The Scale* and *The Marvels.* He is essentially stating that in the same way that alchemy is better than gold, Sufism is better than the philosophical path. However, this is no reason to dismiss the rational sciences, or the opportunity to receive gold, especially for novices. The Sufi path is an arduous path, and to come across real Sufis is rare. Thus, the learned man, who has acquired knowledge of the rational sciences, is superior to a dilettante of the Sufi path. But a real Sufi, although rare, has access to knowledge vastly superior to the gold nuggets received through sense perception, and theoretical abstraction.

In the opening of *The Epistle from on High* (*al-Risāla al-laduniyya*), Ghazālī sets out to dispute those who reject the reality of the esoteric knowledge of the Sufis. He divides knowledge into that which is acquired through human learning and through divine learning. He discusses in detail the two types of human learning, study and reflection. The former acquires knowledge from the outside, accumulating particular and universal knowledge, and the latter acquires knowledge from the inside, through reflection (*nazar*).[57] Thus, through study one learns the universal principles and premises needed for reflection, while reflection is a means of expanding knowledge through syllogistic reasoning, using as inputs that which one has accumulated through study.

Ghazālī then discusses divine learning, stating that it consists of prophetic revelation (*waḥy*) and divine inspiration (*ilhām*). Through prophetic revelation (*waḥy*), the prophet receives knowledge without study or reflection. He states that "the knowledge of the prophets is of a more honourable degree than all the sciences of mankind for it is received directly, without mediation, from God Most High."[58] Ghazālī further states that "it is established that the esoteric knowledge derived from revelation is greater and more certain than the sciences which are acquired."[59] He then says that God has closed this door with Muhammad (ṣ), the seal of all prophets.

Unlike revelation, divine inspiration (*ilhām*) is continuous for all times, and accessible to saints and pious persons. Knowledge derived from it is called "knowledge from on high" (*'ilm al-laduniyya*). Ghazālī states that it is "that which is attained without mediation between the soul and its Creator; it is, indeed, like the

radiance from the Lamp of the Invisible, shed upon a heart which is pure, empty and subtle."[60] This takes place through God's grace, whereby He removes the veil between Himself and the soul of His servant, engraving upon it some of the mysteries and spiritual meanings of reality. In the hierarchy between acquired knowledge and spiritual intuition, Ghazālī ranks the latter as superior because of its divine reception. He states: "True wisdom is attained by knowledge from on high (*ʿilm al-laduniyya*), and so long as a man does not attain to this rank he is not wise, for wisdom is one of the gifts of God Most High."[61] He continues, saying, "and that is because those who attain to the rank of inspired knowledge, having no need of much acquisition and weariness of learning, study little and learn much, and their toil is light and their rest is long."[62] Ghazālī affirms the reality of esoteric knowledge received directly from God and attained through the practice of Sufism. He cogently outlines the superior station of the certainty attained through "knowledge from on high" compared to the acquired sciences. Commenting on *The Epistle from on High*, Lumbard states, "Al-Ghazālī outlines a hierarchy wherein all modes of knowledge are subordinate to 'knowledge from on high', since the latter is bestowed directly by God."[63]

The unknowability of God

In *The Loftiest Goal in Explaining the Meanings of God's Most-Beautiful Names* (*al-Maqṣad al-asna fī sharḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*), Ghazālī states that there are two ways of knowing God, a way that is inadequate and a way that is closed.[64] The former way is to know God's attributes and names, and compare them to our own share of them. However, we will always have an inadequate comprehension thereof. He states that we know ourselves to have the attributes of power, knowledge, life, and speech, and that through revelation or demonstration, we know that God has these attributes too. However, there is no correspondence between them, for God states: "naught is like unto Him (Q. 42:11)." Ghazālī states that "a man cannot understand anything unless he has in him something corresponding to it […] Yet His attributes are too exalted to be likened to ours!"[65] Ghazālī uses an example of explaining to an impotent man the pleasure of intercourse; one may mention the pleasure of sweets; however, the comparison will always be an inadequate comprehension.

The other way to attain true knowledge of God is to adopt the divine attributes to the point of becoming a "lord." However, this is closed and impossible, for only God can attain this. Thus, it is only God who can truly know God, no one else. Thus, humankind can only know God's attributes and names, not His essence. Ghazālī further states:

> If you say: what is the ultimate point of knowledge attained by the knowers of God the most high? We would say: the ultimate knowledge of the "knowers" lies in their inability to know, in their realising in fact that they do not know Him and that it is utterly impossible for them to know Him; indeed, that it is impossible for anyone except God to know God with an authentic knowledge

comprehending the true nature of the divine attributes. If that is disclosed to them by proof, as we have mentioned, they will know it – that is, they will have attained the utmost to which creatures can possibly attain in knowing Him.

That is what the most faithful one [*al-ṣiddiq*] Abū Bakr (may God be pleased with him) pointed out when he said: "the failure to attain perception is itself a perception." And this is what the master of men [the Prophet] – may God's blessings and peace be upon him – meant when he said: "I cannot enumerate Your praise; You are as You have praised Yourself." He did not mean by this that he knew of Him what his tongue was unable to express about Him, but he rather meant: "I do not comprehend Your praise and divine attributes; You alone are the one to comprehend them." Therefore no created thing can enjoy the authentic vision of His essence except in bewilderment and confusion. So the scope of knowledge consists in knowledge of the names and attributes.[66]

According to Paul Heck, the notion that our "inability to know is knowledge" (*al-ʿajz ʿan al-idrāk idrāk*), is called "learned ignorance," approximating a type of scepticism in the Latin West called *docta ignorantia*.[67] This is Ghazālī's attitude towards knowledge of God's essence; it is inaccessible to created beings. The limit of our knowledge is knowing His attributes (*ṣifāt*) and acts (*afʿāl*), and not His essence (*dhāt*). Unlike in Christian theology, in Islamic theology the essence of God is unknowable.[68] It is through contemplating the two books, the book of the divine revelation and the book of nature, that we come to know God. In *The Niche*, Ghazālī narrates the Quranic dialogue between Moses and Pharaoh.[69] He states that when Pharaoh asked who God is, and sought to know His quiddity, Moses responded through informing Pharaoh of the acts of God, not His quiddity.[70] In *The Book of Knowledge*, Ghazālī affirms that part of the esoteric knowledge attained through spiritual unveiling (*al-mukāshafa*) is that "the highest degree of realisation of God most high is realising one's absolute inability to attain realisation of Him."[71] In *The Jewels of the Quran* (*Jawāhir al-Qurān*), Ghazālī states that the highest form of knowledge is knowledge of God, and the attainment of it begins with knowledge of His attributes, then His acts, and finally, His essence. He further states that when Muhammad (ṣ) arrived at the highest level, he realised his inability to comprehend God's essence, and thus affirmed his incapacity to truly praise God.[72]

It may be assumed that this limitation is confined to rational investigation. However, it applies to meta-rational perception, too, including prophets and saints. Ghazālī states,

every creature [angels, prophets, and saints] who is moved to attain and perceive Him will be cast back by the splendour of His majesty, nor is there anyone who cranes his neck to see Him whose glance is not turned aside in amazement.[73]

Thus, he holds that the approach to knowing God is only possible through the avenue of knowing His attributes and names, of which creatures differ in their knowledge of God, with some given more knowledge than others.[74] The knowledge of God is with respect to knowing

the marvels of His Power and the wonders of His signs in this world and the next, and the visible and the invisible world. In this way their knowledge of God – great and glorious – is enhanced, and their knowledge comes close to that of God most High.[75]

According to Ghazālī, the share of our knowledge in the meanings of the names of God differs with respect to our approach, with demonstrative proof (*burhān*) providing a greater certainty than what is achieved through uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*) and dialectical arguments (*jadal*). He states that through this approach, there is no error in the knowledge of

God's possession of these meanings as His characteristics is [sic] revealed to them in a disclosure equivalent in clarity to the certainty achieved by a man in regard to his own inner qualities, which he perceived by seeing his inward aspect.[76]

The highest level of our share of this knowledge, providing greater certainty than demonstrative proof, results in the effort to acquire, imitate, and adorn ourselves with these "lordly" attributes of God, and thus become "lordly" and gain closeness to the creator.[77] It is through the praxis of emptying the heart of vice and carnal passion, and illuminating the self with these "lordly" attributes that one shares in the greatest portion of knowledge of God. Thus, subsequent to rational perception of such knowledge, this stage consists of the truth overwhelming the heart.[78] This level of knowledge is experiential, and commensurate with religious and spiritual obedience. Thus, after attaining philosophical certainty, the individual should move towards spiritual transformation of the self in conformity with the truth attained.[79]
In *The Loftiest Goal*, Ghazālī concludes this discussion, stating,

Now you have come to know how creatures differ in the sea of knowing God – great and glorious – and that their difference is without limit. You have also known that one may rightly say: "No one other than God knows God," and that one may also rightly say: "I know only God."[80]

Ghazālī does not regard these two statements as a contradiction, even though one is a negation and the other an affirmation, for things on both sides may be regarded as true. The former we have discussed. In the case of the latter, it refers to the monistic vision of God, that nothing is in existence but God and His works.[81] The person with such a vision does not see the creation in itself, such as the sky, the earth, and the trees, but they see it as a creation of God. Everything in existence is a manifestation from the light of God's eternal power. This vision holds that God alone exists. Since it is God's presence alone that is seen, it is thus possible to say, "I know only God and I see only God."[82] Thus, in Ghazālī's epistemology, these two statements, although seemingly contradictory, are the pinnacle of certainty in the knowledge of God.

Science of the path to the hereafter (ʿilm ṭarīq al-ākhira)

In *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*, Ghazālī focuses on the "science of the path to the hereafter" (ʿilm ṭarīq al-ākhira). The science of the path to the hereafter consists of two categories, the knowledge of praxis (ʿilm al-muʿāmala) and the knowledge of unveiling (ʿilm al-mukāshafa). The former deals with knowledge of practical conduct and the states of the heart, whereas the latter is esoteric knowledge derived from spiritual unveiling (al-mukāshafa). Although Ghazālī occasionally provides insights into the contents of the knowledge of unveiling, he consistently reminds his reader that *The Revival's* focus is knowledge of practical conduct.

Ghazālī equates the "knowledge of the hereafter" with "knowledge of certainty." He states,

> from that time onwards [tenth century CE], the knowledge of certainty [i.e. knowledge of the hereafter] began to fade, and the domain of the knowledge of the hearts, and scrutiny into the qualities of the soul, and the wiles of Satan became a little known science, and all but a few turned their backs on it.[83]

He continues, stating that "knowledge of the hereafter [i.e. knowledge of certainty] was rolled up like a scroll, and the ability to discern between knowledge and discourse disappeared, except among a select few."[84] He often chastises the religious scholars (ʿulamā), both the jurists (fuqahā) and the theologians (mutakallimūn), for obsessing over the minutiae of law and excessive engagement in theological polemics. He implores them to instead prepare their souls for salvation and felicity in the hereafter. Ghazālī states that the companions of the prophet (ṣ) and the pious predecessors did not gain their prominence because of their mastery of jurisprudence (fiqh) and theology (kalām), but through mastery of their hearts and gaining knowledge of the science of the hereafter.[85] He clearly states that the science of the hereafter is superior to jurisprudence (and theology). However, jurisprudence is contained in it, in that it governs the physical dimension of action.[86] Jurisprudence and theology exist as subordinate roles of assistance to the science of the hereafter; they are not the most authoritative and important of the sciences.[87] Thus, in *The Revival*, Ghazālī develops a systemisation of the science of the hereafter, and places it as a priority among other religious sciences.[88]

Gilʿadi coherently argues that Ghazālī's twofold division of the science of the hereafter is borrowed from the Aristotelian classification of the sciences, the division into practical and theoretical knowledge.[89] He states that this is not obvious since Ghazālī gives it a veneer of Islamic-Sufi terminology. The origin of this division is indeed Aristotelian, though it is seamlessly assimilated into Muslim intellectual thought, evident in al-Fārābi, Avicenna, and Khwārizmi.[90] In the case of Ghazālī, in *The Revival*, the contents of the knowledge of praxis (ʿilm al-muʿāmala) and the knowledge of unveiling (ʿilm al-mukāshafa) is for the most part Muslim religious and mystical teachings, though its framework is an Aristotelian inspiration.

The science of the path to the hereafter, otherwise called the path of Sufism, has a soteriological role which offers salvation (najāt), reward (fawz), or felicity

(*saʿāda*).[91] This is relevant, as certainty (*yaqīn*) is inextricably linked to felicity (*saʿāda*). The degrees of spiritual unveiling (*mukāshafa*), attained through religious and spiritual practice (*muʿāmala*), provide certainty of the reality of things, or knowledge of God. The degree of certainty, or unveilings attained in this world, is commensurate with one's state in the hereafter. However, the path to the apex of certainty in this world and felicity in the hereafter is not a path of theory, but a path of religious and spiritual praxis exemplified by the Sufi path.

Science of praxis (ʿIlm al-muʿāmala)

Before discussing the science of praxis itself, it is worth discussing a consistent theme in Ghazālī's writing, the inextricable link between knowledge (*ʿilm*) and action (*ʿamal*). In the early years prior to Ghazālī's departure from Baghdad in 1095 CE, he dedicated his life to acquiring knowledge and study. However, in his remaining years he dedicated his life to action and continued to engage in learning and writing. In a short treatise titled *O Son* (*Ayyuhā al-walad*), Ghazālī opens the text advising his disciple to find deliverance in action, and not suppose that knowledge alone is the path to salvation.[92] To attain the goal of ultimate truth, or certainty (*yaqīn*) in this world, and felicity (*saʿāda*) in the next, one should expend effort. However, it remains by the mercy of God. Ghazālī quotes Imam Ali, who says, "Whoso believes that he will attain his goal without effort is a wishful thinker. And whoso believes he will reach his goal by the expending of effort is presumptuous."[93] Ghazālī does not advise action without a sound foundation of knowledge; they are inseparably connected. He says, "O disciple, knowledge without action is madness and action without knowledge is void."[94]

In *The Deliverance,* Ghazālī states that the way of the Sufis is the union of knowledge and action. He remarks that "the aim of knowledge is to rid oneself of its reprehensible habits and vicious qualities in order to attain thereby a heart empty of all save God and adorned with the constant remembrance of God."[95] In *O Son*, Ghazālī is critical of assuming that the path of Sufism is merely ecstatic utterances. He states that the essence of the path is sincere effort and the subduing of the carnal passions.[96] The knowledge attained through study should lead to the improvement of the heart and the disciplining of the ego.[97] It is only through such effort and spiritual discipline that the heart will be illuminated with the lights of spiritual gnosis (*maʿrifa*).[98] For Ghazālī, action should follow from knowledge. And action itself, will yield a higher level of knowledge. He states, "act in accordance with what you know for what you do not know to be unveiled to you."[99] That is, he who acts upon the knowledge of practical conduct (*ʿilm al-muʿāmala*) will receive knowledge of unveiling (*ʿilm al-mukāshafa*). Thus, in *O Son*, he admonishes the disciple to study *The Revival* and learn the science of practical conduct and the states of the heart.

In the very opening of *The Scale of Action*, Ghazālī's work on ethical philosophy, he states that felicity (*saʿāda*) can only be attained through both knowledge and action. He thus emphasises the importance of distinguishing true knowledge from false knowledge. This distinguishing capacity is not attainable by imitation (*taqlīd*), but by demonstrative proof (*burhān*), as shown in his *The Criterion of*

Knowledge (*Miʿyār al-ʿilm*). He implores his readers to imitate the prophets and the saints, and not the fallible philosophers, through placing importance on praxis and not *solely* intellectual pursuits.[100] Ghazālī states that a scholar who trains the soul through controlling his desires and moderating his anger is superior to a theoretical scholar who does not put knowledge into action.[101] He gives knowledge a high rank in its relationship to action. He states that both, the Sufis and the philosophers, agree "that knowledge is nobler than action, that knowledge as perfected in action uplifts knowledge, and knowledge in turn guides action to arrive at its mark."[102] Moreover, the Sufi path of self-purification and asceticism leads to knowledge of God and other-worldly happiness (*saʿāda*).[103] Thus, certainty (*yaqīn*) is a result of the balance between knowledge and action. Ghazālī does not dogmatically subscribe to the one or the other, but seeks to reconcile them. It is at this nexus that certainty (*yaqīn*) in this world and felicity (*saʿāda*) in the hereafter is attained.

We now move to the mechanism through which experiential certitude and spiritual unveilings (*mukāshafa*) are attained, the science of praxis. In *The Book of Knowledge*, Ghazālī describes the science of praxis (*ʿilm al-muʿāmala*) as knowledge of practical conduct and knowledge of the states of the heart. It is essentially the path of Sufism, which *in itself* includes Islamic jurisprudence and *in addition* integrates elements of ethical philosophy. Garden argues that due to Ghazālī's disillusionment with politics after the assassination of his patron, the vizier to the Seljuk dynasty, Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 1092), he foregrounded ethics and demoted politics in his science of praxis. Garden thus states that the science of praxis "is founded on individual ethical practice and piety rather than on a wise and stable political order."[104]

As we mentioned earlier, Ghazālī's magnum opus, *The Revival*, focuses on the science of praxis. *The Revival* is divided into an exterior science which deals with knowledge of the bodily actions, and an interior science which deals with knowledge of the states of the heart. It comprises 40 books and is divided into quarters, the quarter of worship, the quarter of customs, the quarter of perils, and the quarter of deliverance. The first quarter begins with *The Book of Knowledge* and *The Principles of Creed*, followed by works on Islamic ritual observance, from the practice and mysteries of purification, prayer, charity, fasting, and pilgrimage, to the etiquette of Quran recitation and religious invocations. These religious rites are integral parts of the practice of a Muslim, and foundational to the practice of Sufism (*taṣawwuf*). Sufi practice without observance of the divine law (*sharīʿa*) is void. Spirituality in Islam is foregrounded in following the religious obligations ordained by God; thus, Ghazālī places it in the first quarter of *The Revival.* Furthermore, worship is foundational to self-purification and nearness to God. The second quarter deals with daily living, such as the proprieties of eating, marriage, earning, friendship, retreat, travel, the lawful (*ḥalāl*) and unlawful (*ḥarām*), the enjoining of right and the forbidding of evil, and the lifestyle of the Prophet (ṣ).

In the second half of *The Revival,* Ghazālī deals with the interior states of the heart and the character traits of the soul, both the blameworthy and the praiseworthy qualities as found in the third and the fourth quarter respectively. He states:

As for the praiseworthy states, they include patience, gratitude, fear and hope [in God], contentment [in God], abstinence, piety, sufficiency [in God], open-handedness, recognition of the grace of God most high in all states, excellence (*iḥsān*), thinking well [of people and God], good character, good mutual relationships, truthfulness, and sincerity. [It comprises as well] the realisation of the realities behind these states, their limits, the causes by which they are obtained, their fruits and identifying signs, as well as the means of remedying weakness until they regain their strength, not ceasing until it returns, [and all of this is] included in the knowledge of the [way to the] hereafter.

As for the blameworthy attributes [of the states of the heart], they include fear of poverty, discontent with [God's] decrees, spitefulness and resentment, envy, dishonesty, ambition to high station, love of praise, love of longevity to enjoy the mundane pleasures of the world, arrogance, ostentation, anger, conceit, enmity and hatred, acquisitiveness, avarice, passionate craving and vanity, insolence [ingratitude] and discontent. [It comprises as well] being in awe of the wealthy and demeaning of the poor, pride and self-importance in wealth and ancestry, rivalry and boastfulness in wealth, knowledge and position, haughtily rejecting [God's] right, and meddling in that which does not concern one. [It comprises as well] pomposity (*ṣalaf*), affectation and currying favour, adulation, being too occupied with the faults in others to see one's own faults, a heart devoid of regret and humility, violent self-defence in the face of humiliation, weakness in the defence of [God's] right, and outwardly claiming brotherhood while holding secret enmity. [Among these traits as well are] feeling secure from the designs of God (swt) from the loss of that which He had given, reliance on one's act of obedience [rather than God's grace], plotting, treachery, and deceit, excessive hopes for longevity, rude harsh behaviour, delight with worldly pleasure and grief over its loss, enjoying intimacy with creation and feeling alienation in separation from them, coarseness, heedlessness, zeal in worldly affairs, and a dearth of shame and compassion. These and their likes are among the attributes of the heart that are the sown fields of moral inequity and the seedbeds of illicit deeds; whereas, their opposites– the praiseworthy character traits – are the source of all obedience and proximity [to God].[105]

The third quarter thus treats the moral vices of the soul, and the final quarter replaces these moral vices with the moral virtues that facilitate the attainment of other-worldly happiness. Inspired by Greek ethics and Sufi spirituality, Ghazālī develops a philosophical ethics which became a theoretical framework for his praxis. To achieve this goal, he composed a few books that become the prelude to the second half of *The Revival*, and these are: *The Marvels of the Heart* (book 21), *Disciplining the Soul, Refining the Character, and Curing the Sickness of the Heart* (book 22), and *Breaking the Two Desires* (book 23).[106] Inspired by the virtue ethics of Aristotle, as mediated through the writings of al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahāni, Ghazālī introduces the virtues of the soul, namely, temperance, courage, wisdom, and justice.[107] In Aristotle, these virtues are essential for happiness (*eudaimonia*) in this world, but for Ghazālī, they facilitate happiness (*saʿāda*) in both this world and the

hereafter.[108] Ghazālī adopts the doctrine of the mean from Aristotle, whereby virtue is attained through habituation as a middle disposition between two extremes. For instance, courage is centred between recklessness and cowardice.[109] It is not merely an act of courage, but an internalised acquisition entrenched in the soul. The four cardinal virtues and the doctrine of the mean resonate for Ghazālī, as they correspond to the virtues mentioned in the Quran and the Quranic spirit of moderation (*wasaṭiyyah*).[110]

The Platonic-Aristotelian tripartite division of the soul into the rational (*quwwat al-ʿaql*), the irascible (*quwwat al-ghaḍab*), and the concupiscent (*quwwat al-shahwa*) faculties is unmistakably present in *The Revival*.[111] The two lower faculties of the soul, the irascible and the concupiscent, are inclined towards anger and desire respectively. The spiritual struggle is for reason to bring anger and desire under its control, and establish a state of equilibrium in the soul which leads to the possession of a beautiful character embellished with the Islamic philosophical virtues.[112] The cultivation of the four virtues of temperance, courage, wisdom, and justice brings about the praiseworthy character traits cited above.[113]

The utmost level of truth, or certainty (*yaqīn*), proceeds from the reign of the intellect over the lower faculties of the self, and the adornment of praiseworthy virtues. Ghazālī states in *The Revival*:

> Faith in God and His Emissary which is free from doubt is powerful certainty, which is the fruit of the intellect and utmost limit of Wisdom.[114] Striving with one's wealth is generosity, which comes from controlling the appetitive faculty, while striving with one's self is Courage, which proceeds from the use of the appetitive faculty under the control of the intellect and with just moderation.[115]

Following the early Arab philosophical tradition, Ghazālī viewed much of Greek moral philosophy as compatible with Islam and the Sufi tradition, and thus indigenised it.[116] In the words of Timothy Winter, "Ghazālī's achievement in the realm of ethics was not the conversion of the ulema to Greek thought, but rather the long-delayed, but very sophisticated, conversion of Plato and Aristotle to Islam."[117]

In the concluding section of *Disciplining the Soul, Refining the Character, and Curing the Sickness of the Heart* (book 22) of *The Revival,* Ghazālī outlines the spiritual practice of the Sufi path.[118] He states that for the seeker to even begin experiencing the disclosure of divine secrets and the Truth, he should renounce the veils of wealth, status, uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*), and sin; and adhere to the religious law (*sharīʿa*) throughout the spiritual path. He then discusses the importance of acquiring a spiritual guide, a Shaykh, to guide him on the Straight Path. Thereafter, the seeker should build an impregnable fortress consisting of solitude (*khalwa*), silence, hunger, and sleeplessness to mend or purify the heart and prepare it for spiritual unveiling (*mukāshafa*). After overcoming disobedience and desire in the heart through spiritual struggle (*mujāhada*), the seeker should occupy his heart with constant remembrance of God. The Shaykh should advise him to engage in a certain *dhikr* (remembrance of God), occupying his tongue and heart with phrases

such as "Allah, Allah, Allah" or "Subḥān Allah, Subḥan Allah" until their meanings prevail in the heart.[119]

The path of remembrance is not empty of satanic whisperings. Ghazālī states that in case passing notions (*khawāṭir*) occur that give rise to doubt (*shakk*), the seeker should seek the guidance of the Shaykh. The bout of doubt can either be resolved through the Shaykh allowing the seeker to reason and reflect on the matter until a light is placed in his heart or, if he is not equipped to do so independently, the Shaykh should restore his certainty (*yaqīn*) through admonitions and proofs.[120] This is consistent with our earlier discussion, where Ghazālī recommends the importance of philosophical training prior to the path of Sufism to dispel passing notions of doubt or unsound imaginings. Otherwise, although not preferable, the Shaykh himself has to furnish the proofs necessary to guide the seeker to certainty. In this text, Ghazālī takes it a step further, and states that if the seeker is not intellectually equipped, it is actually best that he does not occupy himself with remembrance and meditation, and focus on protecting his doctrine, practice the fundamental religious duties, and take blessings through serving those who are in a state of meditation and remembrance.[121]

Ghazālī concludes this discussion stating that self-discipline or the science of praxis is meant to bring the heart into the presence of God.[122] Through such spiritual striving, the glory of God will be unveiled. This unveiling is the cream of experiential certitude (*yaqīn*) or taste (*dhawq*), ineffable to the human tongue but receptive to the human heart.

Science of unveiling (ʿIlm al-mukāshafa)

Alexander Treiger provides a Sufi background to the term "unveiling" (*mukāshafa*) through evaluating the work of Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 896), Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 988), and al-Qushayrī (d. 1074). He shows that unveiling has been connected to a particular stage of certainty.[123] He states that Ghazālī continued within the tradition of classical Sufism, and further enriched it with new meaning. As we have discussed earlier, *The Revival* focuses on reviving the science of the path to the hereafter, which comprises the "science of praxis" and the "science of unveiling." Throughout *The Revival*, Ghazālī intermittently provides insights into the contents of the knowledge of unveiling. In the longest passage on it, Ghazālī describes the knowledge attained during the moment of unveiling:

> Through it, these truths are clarified until the true knowledge of the essence of God (*maʿrifa*) is attained together with that of His eternal and perfect attributes, His works, and His wisdom in the creation of this world and the hereafter as well as the reason for His exalting the latter over the former. Through it also is attained the knowledge of the meaning of prophecy and the prophet, as well as the meaning of revelation. Through it is obtained the truth about Satan, the meaning of the words angels and devils, and the cause of the enmity between Satan and man. Through it is known how the Angel [Gabriel] appeared to the prophets and how they received the divine revelation. Through it is achieved the

knowledge of the kingdom of heaven and earth, as well as the knowledge of the heart and how the legions of the angels and devils clashed therein […] Through it is gained knowledge of the hereafter, paradise, and hellfire, the punishment of the grave, the bridge (*al-ṣirāt*), the balance (*mizān*), and the reckoning (*ḥisāb*), and the meaning of the words of God: *[It will be said], "Read your Book! On this day, your soul suffices as a reckoner against you"* [17:14]. And the meaning of God's words: *And surely the abode of the Hereafter is life indeed, if they but knew* [29:64]. Through this same light is revealed the meaning of meeting Allah and seeing His gracious face; the meaning of being close to Him and of occupying a place in His proximity; the meaning of attaining happiness through communion with the heavenly hosts and association with the angels and the prophet.[124]

Looking at this lengthy passage and other passages in *The Revival*, Treiger has categorised the science of unveiling under five broad divisions, namely, God, Cosmology, Prophetology and Religious Psychology, Eschatology, and Principles of Qurʾān interpretation.[125] Richard Frank dismisses the Sufi origin of the "science of unveiling" and equates it to Ghazālī's "higher theology," which provides "genuine insight into the true reality of things" and is the product of demonstrative reasoning.[126] Ahmad Dallal rejects Frank's position as unwarranted. He argues that "the science of unveiling" should be understood in its conventional Arabic usage, as "the spiritual mystical knowledge of the Sufis."[127] He states that it is the product of worship, self-discipline, and purification of the heart as performed by the prophets and saints, and not demonstrative reasoning.[128] Dallal argues this point, stating that:

> There are abundant illustrations throughout the writings of al-Ghazālī of the distinction he makes between knowledge acquired through demonstrative proof (*burhān*) and other kinds of certain knowledge (*yaqiniyyāt*).[129] It will suffice here to mention one additional example from the *Miʿyār*,[130] a book that, according to Frank (p. 29), is in plain "Aristotelian cast." Al-Ghazālī says that "some kinds of certain conviction (*al-iʿtiqādāt al-yaqīniyya*) cannot be made known to another [person] through demonstrative proof (*bi-tarīq al-burhān*), unless [such a person] participates with us in its practice, so that he can share with us in the knowledge extracted."[131]

I agree with Dallal's position that the knowledge of unveiling is the certain knowledge attained through praxis. The "science of unveiling" is dependent on "the science of praxis" it is not dependent on demonstrative reasoning. In the previous section, we have shown that the "science of praxis" is essentially a Sufi practice focused on purification of the heart and remembrance of God, not the science of syllogistic reasoning. It acts as a means to the knowledge of unveiling. In *The Book of Knowledge*, Ghazālī regards this knowledge as esoteric (*ʿilm al-batīn*), and disclosed to those who are close to God.[132] He states that this knowledge is unveiled after the purification and polishing of the heart. Ghazālī describes it as a

light that is cast in the heart. It is not knowledge attained after intellectual striving, but after spiritual striving. In a later passage, Ghazālī gives further clarity on the matter:

> We mean by the knowledge of unveiling that the cover is raised until the evident truth in these matters manifest [itself] as clearly as if it were seen by the eye, leaving therein *no doubt* whatsoever. This is a potential within the essential nature of the human being, were not the mirror of the heart covered with layers of rust and the dross of impurities that accumulated from this worldly existence. In particular, we intend by the knowledge of the path of the hereafter the means of polishing this mirror from the impurities that make up the veil [between us] and God most high and [prevent our] realisation of His attributes and acts. Assuredly the purification and cleansing [of the heart] are attained by renouncing desires and following the examples of the Prophets – may the blessings of God and His peace be upon them in all their states. Thus, commensurate with what is burnished from the heart and with its turning in the direction of the truth, [God's] realities will gleam in it. The only means to Him is with the application of spiritual discipline – the elucidation of which will follow in its proper place – and through knowledge and learning. This is not the knowledge written in books, nor does one graced with something of it speak openly of it except with people similar to him, who are associated with him, through counsel or in secret. This is the hidden knowledge that [the Messenger of God (ṣ)] intended by his words, "There is a knowledge with a hidden aspect, none know of it but the people of the realisation of God most high…"[133]

From the above-cited text, we see that Ghazālī clearly regards this knowledge as that which leaves no doubt, and provides certainty regarding the nature of reality and that which is hidden from the senses and the intellect. It is attained through spiritual discipline (*riyāḍa*), and not through demonstrative reasoning or the books of the philosophers. It is important to note that Ghazālī merely provided a topical outline of the science of unveiling, and not much of the content itself, which he makes plain should not be openly divulged.

Treiger agrees that the method of attaining the science of unveiling is mystical and not based on syllogistic reasoning. However, he states that the content of the science of unveiling is Avicennian philosophy.[134] I would argue that the origin of the content is Sufi mystical knowledge; however, the language of describing this ineffable experience is facilitated through philosophy. It is understood that if the method itself is Sufi practice, then the content of the unveilings will be the mystical knowledge of Sufism. It is not merely the grafting of Sufi terminology upon philosophical content. The Sufi influence on the science of unveiling (*ʿilm al-mukāshafa*) cannot be reduced to its terminology alone but the method of attainment and content too. Philosophy thus provides a framework or language through which to make sense of spiritual unveilings, but its content is Sufi mystical knowledge. Ghazālī is thus instrumental in the transition from Sufism as a practical method of purification and spiritual discipline, to the development of

theosophical Sufism which appropriates philosophy in its exposition of spiritual experience (*dhawq*).[135]

According to Ghazālī, besides the state of those who go astray (the deniers of truth), there are at least two states in the hereafter, salvation (*najāt*) and felicity (*saʿāda*).[136] These levels of happiness in the hereafter are directly linked to the degree of certainty (*yaqīn*) attained in this world. Ghazālī remarks that salvation (*najāt*) is given to those who had faith (*īmān*) in this world, but this does not entail reward.[137] On the other hand, felicity (*saʿāda*) is granted to those who attain realisation of God, whom the Quran refers to as those who are in proximity to God (*al-muqarrabūn*). The highest degree of spiritual unveiling is the realisation of God, which is sought for its own sake. The people of felicity are the people of certainty (*yaqīn*), who through spiritual discipline and subsequent unveiling come to know God. According to Aristotle, our *telos* is to attain felicity (*eudaimonia*) in this world, through adopting the cardinal virtues of the soul. In the case of Ghazālī, our *telos* is to find felicity in both this world and the hereafter through the purification of the soul and the subsequent cognition of God.[138] In actual fact, the felicity in this world translates into felicity in the hereafter. He states explicitly in the *Revival*:

> The highest level in the knowledge by unveiling is the knowledge of God, praise be to Him; it is the goal that is sought after for itself [alone] because felicity is obtained through it. Moreover, it is the essence of felicity. The heart may not sense that it is the essence of felicity in this world; it will sense it in the Hereafter. It is pure knowledge which has no bounds, for it is not bound by anything else. All other forms of knowledge are like slaves and servants in relation to it because they are sought for its sake.[139]

Unveiling and experiential certainty is thus inextricably linked to felicity in this world and the hereafter. The term "unveiling" (*mukāshafa*) is synonymous with the terms "tasting" (*dhawq*), "witnessing" (*mushāhada*), and "divine inspiration" (*ilhām*), and they are often used interchangeably by Ghazālī. In essence, they refer to the highest level of certainty which transcends reason and sensory perception. As discussed in the previous sections, the term "inspiration" (*ilhām*) is often used to make a distinction between itself and prophetic revelation (*waḥy*), but takes the same meaning as "unveiling" (*mukāshafa*). Prophetic revelation (*waḥy*) ceases with Muhammad (ṣ), but divine inspiration (*ilhām*) continues, and is accessible to the saints (*awliyāʾ*). According to Eric Ormsby, Ghazālī uses the term "tasting" as a metaphor for certainty, or the ultimate truth, accessible only through experience.[140] He states that the "highest truth occurs in that confluence of perception and action denoted by the notion 'taste.'"[141] In our earlier discussion on Ghazālī's quest for prophetic knowledge, we have shown that "tasting" (*dhawq*) is associated with the highest level of perception akin to the sacred prophetic spirit or the states of the Sufis. Ghazālī states in *The Principles of the Creed*, "some religious knowledge becomes perfected when it is experienced (*dhawqan*), and this is like the inner reality of what was there before this."[142] "Tasting" (*dhawq*) is thus a state of certainty (*yaqīn*), or an inner perception which is the perfection of discursive

knowledge. It is a subjective, experiential knowledge that stands above philosophical knowledge, but not in opposition to it. Otherwise put, tasting (*dhawq*) is the crystallisation of philosophical knowledge, but also a door to knowledge not accessible to the mind.[143]

In the first chapter, we discussed direct witnessing (*mushāhada*) as a degree of faith above uncritical imitation of authority (*taqlīd*) and logical inference (*istidlāl*). Ghazālī describes it as the faith of the Gnostics (*'ārifīn*), attained through the light of certainty (*bi nūr al-yaqīn*). In *The Niche of Lights*, Ghazālī distinguishes between the possessors of logical inference (*istidlāl*) and the possessors of witnessing (*mushāhada*).[144] The former sees things and sees God through the things, whereas the latter sees things through God.[145] Ghazālī refers to both as masters of insight, with the possessors of logical inference as those who are grounded in knowledge and the possessors of witnessing as the righteous. In Ghazālī's discussion of the possessors of witnessing, he is in particular talking about a Sufi ontology of oneness which is regarded as the apex of certainty, the subject of our subsequent discussion.

Sufi ontology of oneness as the apex of certainty

In Ghazālī's epistemology, a monistic vision of existence is regarded as the highest level of certainty. It is the cream of esoteric knowledge, attained through unveiling (*mukāshafa*). In this vision, all existence ceases except the existence of God. Essentially, all existents other than God are metaphorical. A mundane vision of the phenomenal world manifests itself as a world of multiplicity, where everything has its own individual existence. In a monistic vision, everything appears together as a unity of being. Ghazālī regards this as a supreme understanding of divine unity (*tawḥīd*), as understood by the masters of insight. He states in *The Niche of Lights*:

> Existence can be classified into the existence that a thing possesses in itself and that which it possesses from another. When a thing has existence from another, its existence is borrowed and has no support in itself. When the thing is viewed in itself and with respect to itself, it is pure nonexistence. It only exist inasmuch as it is ascribed to another. This is not a true existence […] Hence the Real Existent is God, just as the Real Light is He.
>
> From here the gnostics climb from the lowlands of metaphor to the highlands of reality, and they perfect their ascent. Then they see – witnessing with their own eyes – that there is none in existence save God and that "Everything is perishing except His face" [28:88]. [It is] not that each thing is perishing at one time or at other times, but that it is perishing from eternity without beginning to eternity without end. It can only be so conceived since, when the essence of anything other than He is considered in respect of its own essence, it is sheer nonexistence. But when it is viewed in respect of the "face" to which existence flows forth from the First, the Real, then it is seen as existing not in itself but through the face adjacent to its Giver of Existence. Hence, the only existent is the Face of God.
>
> Each thing has two faces: a face toward itself, and a face toward its Lord. Viewed in terms of the face of itself, it is non-existent; viewed in terms of the

face of God, its exists. Hence, nothing exists but God and His face: "Everything is perishing except His face" from eternity without beginning to eternity without end. The gnostics do not need the day of resurrection to hear the Fashioner proclaim, "Whose is the Kingdom today? God's, the One, the Overwhelming" [40:16]. Rather this proclamation never leaves their hearing. They do not understand the saying "God is most great" to mean that He is greater than other things. God forbid! After all, there is nothing in existence along with Him that He could be greater than. Or rather, nothing other than He possesses the level of "with-ness"; everything possesses the level of following. Indeed, everything other than God exists only with respect to the face adjacent to Him. The only existent thing is His Face. It is absurd to say that God is greater than His Face. Rather, the meaning of "God is most great" is to say that God is too great for any relation or comparison, He is too great for anyone other than He – whether it be a prophet or an angel – to perceive the innermost meaning of His magnificence. Rather, none knows God with innermost knowledge save God.[146]

The gnostics, after having ascended to the heaven of reality, agree that they see nothing in existence save the One, the Real. Some of them possess this state as a cognitive gnosis (*'irfān 'ilmī*). Others, however, attain this through a state of tasting (*dhawq*). Plurality is totally banished from them, and they become immersed in sheer singularity. Their rational faculties become so satiated that in this state they are, as it were, stunned. No room remains in them for the remembrance of any other than God, not the remembrance of themselves. Nothing is with them but God. They become intoxicated with such an intoxication that the ruling authority of their rational faculty is overthrown […][147]

When this state gets the upper hand, it is called "extinction" (*fanā'*) in relation to the one who possesses it. Or, rather it is called "extinction from extinction" (*fanā' al-fanā'*), since the possessor of the state is extinct from himself and from his own extinction. For he is conscious neither of himself in that state, nor of his own consciousness, then he would [still] be conscious of himself. In relation to the one immersed in it, this is called "unification," according to the language of metaphor, or is called "declaring God's unity," according to the language of reality.[148]

In the above extract, it emerges that Ghazālī does not exclude knowing God in this manner through philosophical reason, or what he calls cognitive gnosis (*'irfān 'ilmī*). However, this ontology of oneness is predominantly a matter of taste (*dhawq*), which provides greater clarity of the reality of existence. He describes this Sufi state as intoxicating to the extent that the rational faculties are overthrown, and all that is witnessed is God, and no other existent, not even himself. Thus, some Sufi masters made blasphemous statements such as "I am the Truth," "How great is my glory," or "The Lord is the servant and the servant is the Lord." Ghazālī chastises such open speech, and advises to remain silent regarding incommunicable states of spiritual intoxication. In *The Loftiest Goal* (*al-Maqṣad al-asna*), he argues that "union" with or "indwelling" in God is impossible. He states in *The Niche* that

when this intoxication subsides, the ruling authority of the rational faculty – which is God's balance in His earth – is given back to them. They come to know that what they experienced was not the reality of unification but that it was similar to unification.[149]

Thus, Ghazālī encourages prior philosophical study to interpret these ecstatic experiences without making the error of Ḥallāj and Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭami.

This level of certainty moves beyond understanding "the essence of things," and towards a higher order of knowing, where things are seen through God, and not the prism of concepts and definitions. In the words of contemporary philosopher Naquib al-Attas, "His [gnostic] remembrance, reflection and contemplation of that vision at this stage constitute that Knowledge in him whose reality and truth is established by the certainty of direct experience (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*)."[150]

Ghazālī's Sufi ontology of oneness has remarkable similarities to Avicenna's monistic ontology. Avicenna held that God is the Necessary Existent, the Real (*ḥaqq*); all other existents are contingent existents. He states that, essentially, all other existences in themselves deserve non-existence and are null (*bāṭila*).[151] However, there are significant differences between Avicenna's philosophical ontology, and Ghazālī's Sufi ontology. According to Joseph Lumbard:

> For Ghazālī this philosophical explanation does not suffice to preserve the integrity of God's Oneness and singularity. His view of existence is much closer to the Sufi understanding of the oneness of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) than to that of the Islamic peripatetic philosophers, which focused more on the principality of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*). Although Ibn Sīnā's understanding of the nature of *wujūd* opens toward the oneness of existence, it is not expressed outright. This subtle difference turns out to be a cornerstone of Ghazālī's understanding and a point where he inclines more toward the ontology of the Sufis than to that of the philosophers.[152]

Although Ghazālī's ontology differed from Avicenna's, he without a doubt drew on Avicenna's philosophical language to give voice to his Sufi ontology of oneness, which is known through incommunicable spiritual experience (*dhawq*). Thus, Ghazālī not only encourages philosophical training prior to pursuing the Sufi path, but we consistently see his usage of philosophy to communicate his spiritual unveilings (*mukāshafa*).[153] Treiger states that,

> He [Ghazālī] did *not* as is often believed, renounce philosophy to adopt a kind of un- or even anti-philosophical mystical world view. To the contrary, he criticised precisely those tenets of Sufism (ecstatic pronouncements of al-Ḥallāj and al-Bisṭami) that he considered philosophically untenable, while *his* Sufism remained philosophical through and through.[154]

In *The Loftiest Goal*, he states that it is not possible that the visions of the Sufis see what the mind deems as impossible. However, it is possible for them to see

that which exceeds the grasp of the mind. For example, Ghazālī states that a saint (*wali*) may come to know that someone will die the next day, a fact that is not in contradiction to reason; however, it is out of the reach of reason. On the other hand, it is impossible that it be revealed to a saint (*wali*) that the next day God will create someone like Himself, for this clearly contradicts reason. Ghazālī dismisses any scepticism on the basis of spiritual experience (*dhawq*), and maintains the veracity of the human mind.[155] He states that "whoever believes things like this ["union," "indwelling" or God creating another like Himself] has forfeited the power of reason, and can no longer distinguish what he knows from what he does not know."[156] He further states that such scepticism could lead not only to contradicting the judgements of reason, but also deem the revealed law and prophetic statements as false.[157] He thus takes a firm stance in protecting the role of reason as a mediator between truth and falsehood, but at the same time recognises its epistemic limitations in accessing knowledge only attainable through divine revelation (*waḥy*) and inspiration (*ilhām*). He concludes this discussion stating, "Whoever cannot distinguish what contradicts reason from what reason cannot attain is beneath being addressed, so let him be left in his ignorance."[158]

Trust (tawakkul) and the elements of certainty to be sought

In *The Book of Divine Unity and Trust* (*Kitāb al-tawḥīd wa al-tawakkul*), Ghazālī presents the knowledge of divine unity (*tawḥīd*) as true certainty (*yaqīn*), for it is the plinth upon which trust in God (*tawakkul*) is achieved. He states that "Trust in God is one of the stages in the way of religion, and one of the stations of those who are certain in their convictions."[159] He further states that

> faith involves judgement [*tasdīq*], and all judgement in the heart is knowledge, which is called "certitude" [*yaqīn*] when it is firm. Many things pertain to certitude, however, and we only need those on which trust in God can be built. And that is faith in divine unity [*tawḥīd*].[160]

He thus says that faith in divine unity is the foundation to building certitude, and can only truly be understood through praxis (*muʿāmala*) and its subsequent unveiling (*mukāshafa*).[161]

Ghazālī divides faith in divine unity (*tawḥīd*) into four stages, likening it to the layers of a nut: (1) the outer husk; (2) the husk; (3), the kernel; and (4) the oil of the kernel.[162] The first stage of divine unity is merely the verbal profession of faith that "there is no god but God." The second stage is to believe the meaning of this profession in one's heart. It is the faith of the common people (*ʿawām*). Ghazālī states that at this stage, dialectical theology (*kalām*) aids in protecting the heart from heretical innovation and doubt. The third stage is that of those who have faith in divine unity through unveiling (*mukāshafa*) and the "light of truth" (or "truth of certainty").[163] They are described as those who "draw near" (*al-muqarrabūn*) to God. They see things as a multiplicity, but as emanating from a single agent, God. Finally, the fourth stage is the highest level of faith in divine unity, which is

compared to penetrating the oil of the kernel. No other existent is witnessed, but God. Ghazālī states that the Sufis describe it as annihilation (*fanāʾ*) in divine unity. It is the witnessing (*mushāhada*) of the righteous, who only see unity in existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).[164]

This certainty (*yaqīn*) established in divine unity acts as a foundation for trust in divine providence. Ghazālī compares the short-sightedness of the one without faith in divine unity to an ant. He states that a lack of faith in divine unity is like an ant which, while crawling on a piece of paper, sees a pen blacken the paper and assigns the act to the pen, not the fingers or the hand, let alone the one governing the hand.[165] Thus, the one with complete faith in divine unity sees that everything comes from, and is governed by, God. Ghazālī states that trust in divine providence (*tawakkul*) is to rely on God alone. He states that with the certainty that there is no other agent but God (*tawḥīd*), comes also the inner conviction that God is perfect in His knowledge, power, and mercy. Thus, we entrust our affairs to Him alone, and the degree of conviction in these qualities of God manifests itself as trust (*tawakkul*).

Ghazālī makes the distinction between the certainty attained through reason, and the tranquillity and peace attained when that truth overwhelms the heart, the latter being the highest level of certainty.[166] He says that trust in divine providence (*tawakkul*) is not complete until the heart is tranquil. Ghazālī states:

> Indeed, tranquillity of heart is one thing, and certainty quite another, for many who are certain are not thereby at peace, as the Most High said to Abraham – peace be upon him: "Do you not believe? Yes, but would that my heart be at peace" [2:260]. He was asking that he might see the raising of the dead with his eyes to fix it in his imagination, since the soul follows the imagination and rests in it. But it will not rest in a certitude based on declarations about such things until it has attained the last of the stages of a "soul at peace" [89:27], and that can never be at the beginning.[167]

For Ghazālī, the peaceful or tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʾinna*) is attained after certainty in the truth is achieved, and has the strength such that it overwhelms the heart. This is in contradistinction to Pyrrhonian scepticism, where tranquillity is attained after the suspension of judgement.[168] In Ghazālī's epistemology, for the seeker to attain this station of certainty and tranquillity, he should travel to the kernel, and to its centre from where its oil emanates. At this point, all else in existence disappears save God, and a state of absolute trust in divine providence (*tawakkul*) is reached. The most essential elements of certainty, alongside trust, are mentioned in *The Book of Knowledge*:

1) Ghazālī states that to give no reliance to the means, and perceive that everything comes from the Cause of all causes, is to be of the people of certainty (*yaqīn*). The means are only instruments, with no autonomy in themselves. The person of certainty realises that every creation, the sun, the moon, the stars, the animals, the plants and the minerals are all subservient to the will of God. It is just like

the pen in the hand of the writer. He states that the heart of the person of certainty relies on and surrenders to God alone, not to any creation of God, and thus feels no state of anger, animosity, or jealousy towards others.[169]

2) Another state of certainty is the overwhelming trust in one's heart that God will provide sustenance as he promises in the Quran: "There is no creature that crawls on the earth but that its provision lies with God (Q.11:6)." Such a state prevents blameworthy characteristics such as greed and avarice to take hold in his heart.[170]

3) Ghazālī remarks that one of the qualities of the people of certainty is to believe in the heart that every action of good or bad will see its proportionate reward or punishment respectively.[171] The conviction of this state is like the surety of the connection between eating bread and satiation from hunger, or between a snake's poison and death. Thus, the people of certainty fervently strive to do acts of obedience and avoid acts of disobedience, whether big or small. This leads them to consistently monitor (*murāqaba*) their actions, inactions, and arbitrary thoughts (*khawāṭir*), thus protecting them from evil and encouraging them to do acts of piety.[172]

4) Finally, the people of certainty are conscious that God is aware of their every state, undisclosed inclinations, and innermost thoughts. This leads to a noble state and praiseworthy actions even in a state of seclusion. Thus, this station of certainty brings about in one's character humility, fear, and submission before God.[173]

To add a fifth element, we turn to the 32nd book of *The Revival, The Book of Patience and Thankfulness* (*Kitāb al-ṣabr wa al-shukr*):

5) Ghazālī states that patience is acting upon certainty (*yaqīn*). The latter is attained through knowledge, and the former is a quality of the heart. It is through certainty that we know that disobedience is harmful and obedience is beneficial. However, acting upon this, and avoiding disobedience and pursuing obedience requires the quality of patience.[174] He states that "the strength of faith is an expression of inner certainty and it stimulates the resolve for patience."[175] Ghazālī further remarks that the state of patience follows after resisting carnal desires. The spiritual will to resist these appetitive impulses stems from a knowledge of its evil consequences and certitude in faith.[176]

These five manifestations of certainty are in no way exhaustive, but are of the most essential. They are stations arrived at after attaining certain knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-yaqīn*) and strength of heart. In this discussion, Ghazālī is less concerned with esoteric knowledge and more with the praiseworthy characteristics, states, and actions that result from a disposition of certitude. Although Ghazālī occasionally indulges in discussing the knowledge of unveiling, the focus of *The Revival* is to elucidate the science of praxis and its concomitant states and characteristics.

The Quranic triad of certainty

The Quranic triad of certainty, namely, the Knowledge of Certainty (*ʿilm al-yaqīn*), the Eye of Certainty (*ʿayn al-yaqīn*), and the Truth of Certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*),

is present in several verses.[177] Abū Bakr Sirāj al-Dīn (d. 2005) explains the three
degrees of certainty with the imagery of fire. The fire represents the Divine Truth.
The Knowledge of Certainty is analogous to hearing the fire; the Eye of Certainty
stands for seeing the fire; and the Truth of Certainty is akin to being consumed by
the fire.[178] Ghazālī is unique in his approach, reading the verses in both a philosoph-
ical and a mystical manner. Prior to looking at Ghazālī's exegesis of the Quranic
triad of certainty, we shall consider both the linguistic and the Sufi commentators
who came both before and after Ghazālī.

In Surah *al-Takāthur*, it states: "Vying for increase distracts you, till you visit the
graves […] Nay! If you knew with the Knowledge of Certainty (*'ilm al-yaqīn*) (Q.
102:1–5)." In the exegesis of al-Maḥalli (d. 1460) and al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), *Tafsīr
al-Jalālayn*, it says that if you knew with certain knowledge the consequences of
your vainglory (*tafākhur*), you would not concern yourself with it.[179] Ibn Kathīr
(d. 1373) states that if you knew with true knowledge, then the accumulation of
wealth would not distract you from seeking success in the hereafter.[180] Al-Qurtubi
(d. 1273) states that some hold that it is certain knowledge of the reality of the res-
urrection, for when it comes, there will be no doubt. Furthermore, he beckons us to
consider how we will be gathered in the hereafter if we sought to vie for increase
in this world.[181] Al-Ṭabari (d. 923) states that if people knew with certainty that
we would be resurrected on the Day of Judgement, the accumulation of wealth
would not distract them from obedience to God; instead, they would hasten to
worship Him, observe His commands and prohibitions, and reject the lures of the
world.[182] In the verses that follow, it states, "you would surely see Hellfire. Then
you would surely see it with the Eye of Certainty (*'ayn al-yaqīn*) (Q. 102:6–7)."
Jalālayn states that the *'āyana* has the same meaning as *ra'ā*, to see, and thus it is
an emphasis of the reality of the punishment of the hellfire.[183] Qurtubi states that it
is the visual witnessing (*mushāhada*) with which the physical eye sees everything,
with certainty, and nothing escapes it.[184]

In Surah *al-Ḥāqqah*, it says, "It is indeed the Truth of Certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*)
(Q. 69: 51)." Al-Ṭabari and al-Qurtubi state that the Truth of Certainty is the reality
that the Quran is revealed from God.[185] Jalālayn understands the verse to mean
that the Quran is the certain truth.[186] Al-Razi (d. 1210) also states that "the Quran
is the Truth of Certainty, meaning, the truth has no falsehood in it, and certainty
has no doubt in it."[187] Like the above exegetes, Ibn Kathīr states that the Quran is a
truthful report in which there is no dispute, doubt, or suspicion.[188] In the context of
Surah *al-Wāqiʿah*, according to al-Ṭabari, the Truth of Certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*) is
the indubitable reality of the state of the souls (reward or punishment) in the here-
after.[189] Qatāda (d. 735), one of the early and foremost exegetes, said:

> God does not leave anyone until he has informed him of this Quran; as for the
> believer he is made certain of it in this world, and that benefits him on the day
> of resurrection. As for the disbeliever, he is made certain of it on the day of res-
> urrection, when certainty of it will not benefit him.[190]

The above exegesis is predominantly linguistic, and primarily delineated by the
context. The Sufi commentators read the Knowledge of Certainty (*'ilm al-yaqīn*),

the Eye of Certainty (*ʿayn al-yaqīn*), and the Truth of Certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*) as three stages of spiritual development.[191] A precursor to Ghazālī, al-Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 896 CE), commenting on the verses of *Surah al-Takāthur*, sees certainty as a manifestation of faith and praxis. He draws a comparison to the three parts of a lamp, in which he says that "certainty (*yaqīn*) is the fire, affirmation on the tongue is the wick (*fatīla*) and the deed is its oil (*zayt*)."[192] Furthermore, he states that "certainty begins with unveiling (*mukāshafa*), then [comes] visual beholding (*muʿāyana*), and witnessing (*mushāhada*)."[193] This may be understood as coinciding with the three stages of certainty or spiritual development.

Abū Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 1072), a Sufi master who influenced Ghazālī, states in his *tafsir* that the difference between the Knowledge of Certainty, the Eye of Certainty, and the Truth of Certainty depends on the degree of proof. He states that the path to certainty ranges from hidden (*khafāʾ*) to manifest (*jalāʾ*).[194] The former is the state of the ordinary folk (*ʿawām*), and the latter is the state of the elect (*khawāṣ*).[195] The elect is in a state of submission and constantly witnesses the manifestation of God. He further remarks that certainty may be self-evident (*ḍarūri*), rationally acquired (*kasbi*), or spiritually perceived (*idrāki*).[196] In his Sufi epistle *al-Risālat al-Qushayriya*, he states that the Knowledge of Certainty is attained through proof (*burhān*); the Eye of Certainty is attained through clear evidence (*bayān*); and the Truth of Certainty is attained through direct witnessing (*ʿayān*).[197] He states that these are attained by the people of intellect, the people of knowledge, and those of divine gnosis respectively.[198]

Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240), who was inspired by Ghazālī, states in *The Meccan Openings* that the Knowledge of Certainty is attained by proof (*dalīl*) in which there is no doubt (*shubha*); the Eye of Certainty is what is attained through spiritual unveiling (*mukāshafa*);[199] and the Truth of Certainty is what is received in the heart from witnessing (*shuhūd*).[200] Based on the maxim "He who knows himself knows God," Ibn ʿArabī comments that the

> one who witnesses himself witnesses his Lord, and thereby moves from the certainty of knowledge to the certainty of the eye; then when he returns to his body, he returns to the certainty of truth from the certainty of the eye, not to the certainty of knowledge.[201]

In many respects, Ghazālī is similar to his Sufi predecessors, and those who succeeded him, but also displays unique elements in his reading of the Quranic triad of certainty. In his exegesis, he recognises the knowledge attained through revelation, the intellect, and mystical intuition. Parallels can be drawn between his theory of certainty and the Quranic triad of certainty. The first type of certainty, Knowledge of Certainty (*ʿilm al-yaqīn*), can be understood as religious knowledge, of which Ghazālī attained a sure and certain faith.[202] It was never an object of his scepticism. He says that

> From the sciences which I had practiced and the methods which I had followed in my inquiry into the two kinds of knowledge, revealed and rational, I had

already acquired a sure and certain faith in God Most High, in the prophetic mediation of revelation, and in the Last Day.[203]

He describes Knowledge of Certainty (*ʿilm al-yaqīn*) as the knowledge of "the domain [concerning the] knowledge of the heart, and scrutiny into the qualities of the soul and the wiles of Satan."[204] The Knowledge of Certainty (*ʿilm al-yaqīn*) is essentially religious knowledge consisting of the foundations of the faith, which include by extension the knowledge of praxis (*ʿilm al-muʿāmala*).

The second type of certainty is the Eye of Certainty (*ʿayn al-yaqīn*), which is the intellect, or the ability to comprehend the nature of reality.[205] Ghazālī further states that it is "the inherent quality by which humankind is differentiated from the animals."[206] He says it should not be reduced to dialectics and disputation, but primarily it is the means through which the veracity of God's word and the pro-phetic traditions are known.[207] Thus, it can be understood that through the "eye of certainty," the "knowledge of certainty" can be attained, which includes the know-ledge of praxis and the means through which the Truth of Certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*) can be attained.

Finally, the highest level of certainty, the Truth of Certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*), is knowledge attained by way of inner witnessing (*mushāhada*).[208] Ghazālī states that it is superior in clarity to knowledge attained through visual perception. It is the fruit of Sufi practice, which involves detachment from the world, purification of the heart, and constant remembrance of God. This level of certainty is the highest truth and leads to the ultimate knowledge of God. Through inner witnessing, things are not seen as subsisting in themselves but are seen through God, the only existent. Hence, "Everything is perishing except His face (Q. 28:88)." At the pinnacle of certainty, through inner witnessing (*mushāhada*), the phenomenal world is not seen through the prism of multiplicity or individual quiddities, but as a singularity, through God alone, the Necessary Existent.

Conclusion

During Ghazālī's spiritual crisis, his brother, Ahmad al-Ghazālī, approached him on his sickbed, saying, "You've bestowed guidance on others but are not well guided yourself. You've heard the homily but you haven't heeded it. O whet-stone, how long will you sharpen the iron and not cut?"[209] Ghazālī eventually left Baghdad and the lures of the world, and embarked on his spiritual sojourn, beginning with the road to Damascus. Ghazālī's spiritual crisis was also an epis-temological crisis, for he sought the experiential certainty of the Sufis. He affirms the existence of a higher station of certainty, attained through treading the path of Sufism.

For Ghazālī, the path to knowledge of God either takes place through the door of philosophical demonstration or the door of Sufism. He regards both paths as legitimate, although the Sufi path is superior in clarity and certainty, albeit more arduous and longer. Thus, he advises those who are intellectually adept to study the rational sciences *prior* to pursuing the Sufi path.

Ghazālī laments that Muslim scholars have neglected the "science of the path to the hereafter" (*ʿilm ṭarīq al-ākhira*). Thus, he was bent on reviving the path, focusing on its two components: the knowledge of praxis (*ʿilm al-muʿāmala*) and the knowledge of unveiling (*ʿilm al-mukāshafa*). In his epistemology, knowledge (*ʿilm*) plays an important role in guiding *praxis* (*ʿamal*). Both knowledge and practice are instrumental in the attainment of experiential certainty (*yaqīn*) and spiritual unveilings (*mukāshafa*). The science of praxis is chiefly that of the path of Sufism. It is partly inspired by elements of the Hellenic ethical tradition which could be harmonised with Sunni orthodoxy. Through Ghazālī, we observe the indigenisation of Platonic and Aristotelian ethics within the discipline of the science of praxis.

The "knowledge of unveiling" is the esoteric knowledge of the Sufis, not the product of demonstrative reasoning. It is through the "science of praxis" that the knowledge of unveiling is attained. It is a gift bestowed upon the spiritual seekers of such knowledge. The "knowledge of unveiling" yields the utmost certainty (*yaqīn*) of the reality of things. However, Ghazālī expresses the content of such ineffable mystical experiences through the language and theoretical framework of the philosophers. In Ghazālī's epistemology, the "knowledge of unveiling" has a soteriological role. The highest degree of spiritual unveiling is the realisation of God (*maʿrifa*), which leads to felicity (*saʿāda*) in the hereafter. Thus, the telos of the Sufis is to seek felicity in not just this world but the hereafter too.

Ghazālī's approach to knowledge is to seek the universal truth regardless of its origin. If knowledge was demonstratively true and consistent with the Islamic tradition, he had no qualms with integrating it into his writing. In his apology against accusations of being corrupted by philosophy, he states that many of the so-called philosophical ideas are his own, and found in the works of the Sufis and religious scriptures. However, he states:

> Assuming that they are found only in the writings of the philosophers, if what is said is reasonable in itself and corroborated by apodictic proof and not contrary to the Qur'an and the Sunna, then why should it be shunned and rejected? If we were to open this door and aim at forgoing every truth which had been first formulated by the mind of one in error, we would have to forgo much of what is true.[210]

Ghazālī's methodology followed the directive of Imam ʿAlī: "Do not know the truth by men, but rather, know the truth and you will know its men." He did not discriminate regarding the source of knowledge but took ownership of wisdom wherever it was found, taking to heart the prophetic tradition that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer, so wherever he finds it, let him claim it."[211] Ghazālī compares himself to an expert money-changer who can distinguish between genuine gold coins and counterfeit coins. He had the competence to read the works of the philosophers, take inspiration, and integrate what is universal and compatible into the Islamic tradition. However, he warns that this is not to be pursued by laymen. It takes expertise, just like "a child must be prevented from handling a snake, not the skilled snake charmer."[212]

Ghazālī challenged the parochialism of the philosophers, who assumed truth to only be accessible to the mind. He also encouraged the Sufis to pursue the rational sciences before their commitment to ascetic practices. We have shown that harmoniously, Ghazālī combines Sufism and philosophical reasoning. He is an advocate for both spiritual discipline and rational investigation. The philosophical elements integrated into Ghazālī's Sufism cannot be overlooked. It plays a pivotal role in his epistemology. He carried out this integration in a sophisticated and critical manner without compromising Islamic orthodoxy. However, considering Ghazālī's corpus of works, and despite the apologetic nature of *The Deliverance*, we accept his stated commitment to Sufism as a superior means to truth and certainty.

Notes

 1 Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 91.
 2 Al-Ghazālī, *Letter to a Disciple (Ayyuhāʾl-walad): Bilingual English-Arabic Edition Translated with an Introduction & Notes*, XX.
 3 Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 94.
 4 Ibid.
 5 Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and His Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 155. During the Nishapur controversy, Ghazālī was accused of being a follower of the Ismāʿīlīs, the philosophers, Zoroastrains, and the Brethren of Purity. He thus wrote the *Composition on the Critiques of the Revival* (*al-Imlāʾ fī ishkālāt al-iḥyāʾ*) to clarify and rebut these accusations.
 6 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, 100–101.
 7 Ibid., 101.
 8 (Q 29:69, 65:2, 8:29, 39:22, 2:279, 2:118, 18:65)
 9 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:23–26.
10 Ibid., 3:25. Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, 105. Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt al-anwār): A Parallel English-Arabic Text Translated, Introduced and Annotated*, 29.
11 Ormsby, "The Taste of Truth: The Structure of Experience in Ghazālī's *Munqidh*," 151.
12 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:25.
13 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, 104.
14 Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 98.
15 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, 106.
16 Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights* (*Mishkāt al-anwār*)*: A Parallel English-Arabic text Translated, Introduced and Annotated*, 36–37.
17 Ghazālī's positive attitude to the rational spirit and the reflective spirit, we have discussed in detail in Chapters 1 and 2.
18 Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights* (*Mishkāt al-anwār*)*: A Parallel English-Arabic text Translated, Introduced and Annotated*, 37.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 30.

21 Ibid., 38.
22 This perspective is contrary to Binyamin Abrahamov's argument in "Al-Ghazālī's Supreme Way to Know God," 162–166.
23 Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights* (*Mishkāt al-anwār*)*: A Parallel English-Arabic Text Translated, Introduced and Annotated*, 38.
24 Ibid., 39–41.
25 The following verse is known as the "light verse": "God is the light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His light is a niche, wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is a shining star kindled from a blessed olive tree, neither of the East nor of the West. Its oil would well-nigh shine forth, even if no fire touched it. Light upon light. God guides unto His light whomsoever He will and God sets forth parables for mankind, and God is the Knower of all things (Q. 24:35)."
26 This is consistent with Ghazālī's discussion in *The Marvels of the Heart*, as we have discussed in the section on "The metaphysical dimensions of knowledge" in Chapter 1.
27 Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazālī's Supreme Way to Know God," 166. The notion of intuition (*ḥads*) is an Avicennian appropriation of the Aristotelian concept of ἀγχίνοια (*agchinoia*), meaning, quick wit and readiness of mind. See Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy*, 31.
28 Janssens, "Al-Ghazālī between Philosophy (*Falsafa*) and Sufism (*Taṣawwuf*): His Complex Attitude in the Marvels of the Heart (ʿAjāʾib al-qalb) of the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*," 623.
29 For a comprehensive overview of the Avicennian influence of this schematic on Ghazālī, see Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and Its Avicennian Foundation*, 72–78.
30 van Ess, "Quelques remarques sur le Munqidh Min Aḍ-Ḍalâl."
31 Ibid.
32 Menn, "The Discourse on the Method and the Tradition of Intellectual Autobiography," 146.
33 Ibid., 172, 160. In Galen's case, it is as a medical authority and Aristotelian logic as an alternative to other methods.
34 Ghazālī compares himself to a money-changer. He says in *The Deliverance* that "the money-changer suffers no harm if he puts his hand into the sack of the trickster and pulls out the genuine pure gold from among the false and counterfeit coins, so long as he can rely on his professional acumen." Ghazālī further argues that he happened to reach the same ideas independently, and in other cases, the philosophers took the ideas from the writings of the Sufis. Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 79. Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, 74.
35 Menn, "The Discourse on the Method and the Tradition of Intellectual Autobiography," 161.
36 For a comprehensive outline of the Nishapur controversy, see Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and His Revival of the Religious Sciences*.
37 van Ess, "Quelques remarques sur le Munqidh Min Aḍ-Ḍalâl."
38 This is suggested by Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and His Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 165, 169. Campanini comes to the same conclusion as we do. He argues that despite *The Deliverance* being an apologetic work, he believes that the bulk of Ghazālī's narrative is sincere. He did not lie but probably emphasised some points rather than others, with an apologetic intention in mind. Campanini, *Al-Ghazali and the Divine*, 34–35.
39 Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 9.

40 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:21.

41 Al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, 222. Ghazālī probably uses the term "theoreticians" (*nuẓār*) rather than "philosophers" (*falāsifa*) because of its neutral connotation. For a similar discussion, see also Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:18–20.

42 Al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, 224. Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:30.

43 Al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, 224.

44 Al-Ghazālī, *The Marvels of the Heart: Translation of Kitāb sharḥ ʿajāʾib al-qalb, Book 21 of the Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 61–62. cf. Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:22; Al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, 225.

45 Al-Ghazālī, *The Scale of Action: Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's Mīzān al-ʿamal*. Al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, 228.

46 Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and His Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 49.

47 Hourani, "A Revised Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings," 294. Hourani favours an earlier date, in the year 1095 CE. However, in an earlier publication he states that *The Scale of Action* is a work written shortly after his departure from Baghdad (1095 CE). Treiger also dates the work as shortly after his departure from Baghdad. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and Its Avicennian Foundation*, 12.

48 That is a conclusion we arrive at by taking Ghazālī's word (i.e. his decisive "conversion" in 1095 CE). Furthermore, a more conservative assessment of our conclusion would be if we took the word of his student Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī, that he was already practicing Sufism two years prior to his departure from Baghdad in 1095 CE. Ghazālī must have been frustrated in his failed attempts to practice Sufism, and soon discovered the reason for it. As already alluded to above, the Sufi master he approached explained to him that his desire to increase his religious devotions, whether it be the reciting of the Quran or the extolling of the names of God, would not help him greatly, and that he needed to first work on his ego and purify it of all vices. He could only do this by detachment from this world (*zuhd*). This eventually led to his departure from Baghdad.

49 Al-Ghazālī, *The Marvels of the Heart: Translation of Kitāb sharḥ ʿajāʾib al-qalb, Book 21 of the Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 59–60.

50 Al-Ghazālī, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, 11. It is worth noting that Treiger makes a distinction between the two types of non-inspirational modes of cognition. He states that in the model of the pond, Ghazālī downplays syllogistic reasoning and focuses on learning through the senses, that is, empirical inference. However, in the model of the mirror of the heart and the Preserved Tablet, Ghazālī emphasises syllogistic reasoning as a form of philosophical reasoning. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and Its Avicennian Foundation*, 72–73.

51 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:21–22; Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights* (*Mishkāt al-anwār*): *A Parallel English-Arabic Text Translated, Introduced and Annotated*, 26.

52 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:26.

53 Ibid.; Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt al-anwār): A Parallel English-Arabic Text Translated, Introduced and Annotated*, 27.

54 Al-Ghazālī, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, 13.

55 Ibid., 7.

56 Ibid., 11–12.

57 Al-Ghazālī, "*Risāla al-laduniyya*," 247–250.

58 Al-Ghazālī, *Message from on High: A Translation of Risāla al-laduniyya*, 43.

59 Ibid., 45.

60 Ibid., 46. Translation slightly modified.

61 Ibid., 49–50.

62 Ibid., 50.

63 Lumbard, "Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī and the Art of Knowing," 409.

64 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣad al-asna fī sharḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, 36. See also Shehadi, *Ghazālī's Unique Unknowable God*.

65 Al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety Nine Beautiful Names of God: al-Maqṣad al-asna fī sharḥ asmāʿ Allāh al-ḥusnā Translated with Notes*, 40.

66 Ibid., 42.

67 Heck, "Chapter 14: Skepticism in Classical Islam: The Case of Ghazali." See also, Heck, *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion*.

68 Campanini, *Al-Ghazali and the Divine*, 55.

69 "Pharaoh said, 'And what is the Lord of the worlds?' He said, 'The Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them – would that you were certain.' He said to those around him, 'Do you not hear?' He said, 'Your Lord, and the Lord of your fathers of old.' He said, 'Truly your messenger who has been sent to you is possessed (Q. 26:23)!'"

70 Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt al-anwār): A Parallel English-Arabic Text Translated, Introduced and Annotated*, 28.

71 Al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge: Book 1 of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 50.

72 Al-Ghazālī, *Jawāhir al-Qurān*, 42.

73 Al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety Nine Beautiful Names of God: al-Maqṣad al-asna fī sharḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā Translated with Notes*, 42–43.

74 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣad al-asna fī sharḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, 40.

75 Al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety Nine Beautiful Names of God: al-Maqṣad al-asna fī sharḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā Translated with Notes*, 44.

76 Ibid., 31. Slight modification in translation.

77 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣad al-asna fī sharḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, 30–31.

78 This discussion is consistent with chapter 6 of the *Book of Knowledge* (*Kitab al-ʿilm*) discussed in Chapter 1, "Ghazālī's skepticism and quest for the foundations of knowledge," in the section titled "Ghazālī's hierarchy of certainty."

79 Bakar, "The Place of Doubt in Islamic Epistemology: Al-Ghazzali's Philosophical Experience."

80 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣad al-asna fī sharḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, 41.

81 Ibid., 41–42.

82 Ibid., 42.

83 Al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge: Book 1 of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 236.

84 Ibid.

85 Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿilm*, 66.

86 Al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge: A Translation with Notes of the Kitab al-ʿilm of al-Ghazālī's Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 58.

87 Gianotti, "Beyond Both Law and Theology: An Introduction to al-Ghazālī's 'Science of the Way of the Afterlife' in Reviving Religious Knowledge (*Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*)," 604.

88 Ibid., 598.

89 Gilʿadi, "On the Origin of Two Key-Terms in al-Ghazālī *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*," 83. In *The Scale of Action* (*Mizān al-ʿamal*), the appropriation of this division is more obvious due to its preservation of philosophical terminology.

90 Ibid., 83–84.

91 Ghazālī probably decided to use the phrase "science of the path to the hereafter" (*ʿilm ṭarīq al-ākhira*), to make his *Revival* accessible to a wide public, including those who might be averse to Sufism.

92 He specifically critiques the philosophers as well for holding the idea that through knowledge alone and development of the intellectual faculties, salvation is attained. According to Davidson, Avicenna held the Neoplatonic doctrine that "the soul enjoying supreme *eudaemonia* (*saʿāda*) is the one that achieves a perfect disposition for intellectual thought in the present life." Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, 109. See also Al-Ghazālī, *Letter to a Disciple (Ayyuhāʾl-walad): Bilingual English-Arabic Edition Translated with an Introduction & Notes*, 6.

93 Al-Ghazālī, *Letter to a Disciple (Ayyuhāʾl-walad): Bilingual English-Arabic Edition Translated with an Introduction & Notes*, 12.

94 Ibid., 16. In *The Book of Knowledge,* he paraphrases the Sufi master Junayd, saying that "one who acquires *ḥadīth* and knowledge then takes the Sufi path will succeed; while one who takes the Sufi path before acquiring knowledge is gambling with his soul." Al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge: Book 1 of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 56.

95 Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 89–90.

96 Al-Ghazālī, *Letter to a Disciple (Ayyuhāʾl-walad): Bilingual English-Arabic Edition Translated with an Introduction & Notes*, 25.

97 Ibid., 57.

98 In *O Son*, Ghazālī recommends the traveler to take a spiritual master to guide him in purifying himself and direct him to knowledge of God. Ibid., 35. This is also discussed at length in *The Revival,* particularly in the *Book of Disciplining the Soul, Refining the Character, and Curing the Sickness of the Heart* (*Kitāb riyāḍat al-nafs wa-tahdhīb al-akhlāq wa-muʿālajat amrāḍ al-qalb*). Although Ghazālī mostly speaks about the Sufis in a third-person sense (which led some scholars to assume he is not a partisan of Sufism), this is one of the countless characteristics of the Sufi path found in the writings of Ghazālī.

99 Ibid., 40. This is a paraphrasing of a prophetic *ḥadith* in which Muhammad (ṣ) said, "Whoever acts upon what he knows, God will bestow upon him knowledge that he did not know." Jarrāḥi, *Kashf al-khafāʾ*, vol. 2, p. 365, ḥadīth 2542. Cited in Ibid.

100 Al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, 186.

101 Ibid., 192.

102 Al-Ghazālī, *The Scale of Action: Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's Mīzān al-ʿamal*. Al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, 194.

103 Al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, 196.

104 Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and His Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 76.

105 Al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge: Book 1 of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 52–53.

106 For a comprehensive discussion of this development, see Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazālī on Disciplining the Soul and on Breaking the Two Desires: Books XXII and XXIII of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*.

107 Mohamed, *The Path to Virtue: The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Raghib Al-Isfahani*. See also Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazālī on Disciplining the Soul and on Breaking the Two Desires: Books XXII and XXIII of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 20. Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*.

108 Mohamed, *The Path to Virtue: The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Raghib Al-Isfahani*, 244.

109 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:54.

110 See Mohamed, "The Role of the Qurʾānic Principle of *Wasaṭiyyah* in Guiding Islamic Movements."

111 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, 3:53.

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid., 3:55.

114 Ghazālī discusses this with respect to the following Quranic verse: "Only they are believers who believe in God and His Messenger, then do not doubt, and who strive for their wealth and themselves in the way of God, it is they who are the truthful (Q. 49:15).".

115 Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazālī on Disciplining the Soul and on Breaking the Two Desires: Books XXII and XXIII of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 23.

116 In addition, much of what Ghazālī took from the Arab philosophical tradition was in itself, according to him, taken from Sufism. In *The Deliverance,* Ghazālī states of the Arab philosophers: "All they have to say about the moral sciences comes down to listing the qualities and habits of the soul, and recording their generic and specific kinds, and the way to cultivate the good ones and combat the bad. This they simply took over from the sayings of the Sufis. These were godly men who applied themselves assiduously to invoking God, resisting passion, and following the way leading to God Most High by shunning worldly pleasures. In the course of their spiritual combat, the good habits of the soul and its shortcomings had been disclosed to them and also the defects that vitiate its actions. All this they set forth plainly. Then the philosophers took over these ideas and mixed them with their own doctrines, using the lustre afforded by them to promote the circulation of their own false teaching." For a comprehensive account of the presence of the Arab philosophical tradition in Ghazālī's Sufism, see Janssens, "Al-Ghazālī between Philosophy (*Falsafa*) and Sufism (*Taṣawwuf*): His Complex Attitude in the Marvels of the Heart (*ʿAjāʾib al-qalb*) of the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*."

117 Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazālī on Disciplining the Soul and on Breaking the Two Desires: Books XXII and XXIII of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, LVIII.

118 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:74–79.

119 "Subḥan Allah" means "Glory be to Allah."

120 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:77–78.

121 Ibid., 3:78.

122 Ibid.

123 Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and Its Avicennian Foundation*, 42–44.

124 Adapted translation from Al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge: A Translation with Notes of the Kitab al-ʿilm of al-Ghazālī's Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 40–41. Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿilm*, 59–60.

125 Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and Its Avicennian Foundation*, 40.

126 Frank, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ashʿarite School*, 21–22.

127 Dallal, "Ghazali and the Perils of Interpretation," 779.

128 Ibid.

129 As we have shown in section two of this chapter, "The path to the knowledge of God and our inability to truly know Him."

130 Al-Ghazālī, *Miʿyār al-ʿilm*, 192.

131 Dallal, "Ghazali and the Perils of Interpretation," 779.

132 Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿilm*, 59.

133 Al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge: Book 1 of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 51. Emphasis added. According to Joseph Lumbard, "The process of polishing the heart is presented here as the path that leads to greater certitude, since it involves cleansing

the very organ of perception by which realities are witnessed directly. The knowledge of learning and acquisition employed by others, including philosophers, can attain to a very high level. Nonetheless it pertains to the door that 'opens toward the five external senses that are tethered to the visible material world.'" Lumbard, "Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī and the Art of Knowing," 414.

134 Treiger, "Al-Ghazālī's Classifications of the Sciences and Descriptions of the Highest Theoretical Science," 30–31. For a discussion on this matter in *The Revival* and its relationship to the *Scale of Action*, see Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and His Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 72–75.

135 Treiger argues that Ghazālī was a key figure in this transition because of his infusion of Avicennian philosophy into Sufism. Treiger, "Al-Ghazālī's Classifications of the Sciences and Descriptions of the Highest Theoretical Science," 31.

136 Inspired by this Quranic verse, Ghazālī distinguishes between those who are damned, those who are saved, and those who attain felicity: "If that dying person is one of those who will be brought near to God, he will have rest, ease, and a Garden of Bliss; if he is one of those on the Right, [he will hear], 'Peace be on you' from his companions on the Right; but if he is one of those who denied the truth and went astray, he will be welcomed with scalding water. He will burn in Hell." Translation from Abdel Haleem, *The Quran*, 88–96. In other texts, Ghazālī mentions an intermediate state, reward (*fawz*), between salvation (*najāt*) and felicity (*saʿāda*).

137 Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿilm*, 140.

138 See also, Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and His Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 70–72. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and Its Avicennian Foundation*, 44–47.

139 Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazali on Patience and Thankfulness*, 212–213. Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 4:137.

140 Ormsby, "The Taste of Truth: The Structure of Experience in Ghazālī's *Munqidh*," 152.

141 Ibid., 141.

142 Al-Ghazālī, *The Principles of the Creed*, 51.

143 On many occurrences Ghazālī talks about mystical knowledge as a perfection of discursive knowledge, and in other contexts he discusses it as knowledge not accessible to the mind. In my estimation, it refers to both; however, this is a subject that requires further research that is not in the scope of this study.

144 Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt al-anwār): A Parallel English-Arabic Text Translated, Introduced and Annotated*, 23. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazālī on Disciplining the Soul and on Breaking the Two Desires: Books XXII and XXIII of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*.

145 Ghazālī relates this to two phrases in a verse of the Quran: the former refers to "We shall show them our signs upon the horizons" and the latter refers to "Does it not suffice that the Lord is Witness over all things (Q. 41:53)."

146 Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt al-anwār): A Parallel English-Arabic Text Translated, Introduced and Annotated*, 16–17.

147 Ibid., 17–18.

148 Ibid.

149 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣad al-asna fī sharḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, 128–129. Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt al-anwār): A Parallel English-Arabic Text Translated, Introduced and Annotated*, 18.

150 al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*, 192.

151 Avicenna states in *The Book of Healing* (*Kitāb a1-Shifāʾ*), "[As for] the rest of things, their quiddities, as you have known, do not deserve existence; rather, in themselves and with the severing of their relation to the Necessary Existent, they deserve nonexistence. For this reason, they are all in themselves nugatory, true [only] through Him and, with respect to the facet [of existence] that follows Him, realised. For this reason, "all things perish save His countenance" [Quran 55:26]. Hence, He is the most entitled to be [the] Truth." Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing: A Parallel English-Arabic Text Translated, Introduced, and Annotated*, 284.

152 Lumbard, "Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī and the Art of Knowing," 405–406.

153 Thus, Ghazālī stands as an instrumental figure in influencing the theosophical Sufism of personalities like Ibn ʿArabi (d. 1240).

154 Treiger, "Monism and Monotheism in al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-anwār*," 16. Emphasis in original. See footnote 149.

155 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣad al-asna fī sharḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, 132.

156 Al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety Nine Beautiful Names of God: al-Maqṣad al-asna fī sharḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā translated with notes*, 157.

157 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣad al-asna fī sharḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, 132.

158 Al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety Nine Beautiful Names of God: al-Maqṣad al-asna fī sharḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā Translated with Notes*, 158.

159 Burrell, *Faith in Divine Unity and Trust in Divine Providence: The Revival of the Religious Sciences Book XXXV*, 4.

160 Ibid., 9.

161 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 4:245.

162 Ibid., 4:245–246.

163 Ghazālī describes this as the expansion of the heart, in reference to the Quranic verse "Whomsoever God wishes to guide, He expands his breast for submission (Q. 6:125)," and the verse "What of one whose breast God has expanded for submission, such that he follows a light from his Lord (Q. 39:66)?"

164 Earlier, we discussed that Ghazālī generally uses "unveiling" (*mukāshafa*) and "witnessing" (*mushāhada*) interchangeably, as synonyms. In this context, he places the latter at a higher stage of certainty on the Sufi path. This is consistent with his predecessors, such as Sahl al-Tustari, Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, and Al-Qushayrī. For further discussion on the term "unveiling" (*mukāshafa*) and Ghazālī's Sufi predecessors, see Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and Its Avicennian Foundation*, 42–43.

165 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 4:248.

166 See the section on Ghazālī's hierarchy of certainty in Chapter 1.

167 Burrell, *Faith in Divine Unity and Trust in Divine Providence: The Revival of the Religious Sciences Book XXXV*, 57. Translation of the Quranic verse amended.

168 See the introduction to Greek scepticism in Chapter 1.

169 Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿilm*, 193.

170 Ibid., 194.

171 "So whosoever does a mote's weight of good shall see it. And whosoever does a mote's weight of evil shall see it (Q. 99: 7-8)."

172 Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿilm*, 194.

173 Ibid., 194–195.

174 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 4:66.

175 Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazali on Patience and Thankfulness*, 51.

176 Ibid., 63.

177 See Quran 102:5, 102:7, 69:51, and 56:95.

178 Sirāj ad-Dīn, *The Book of Certainty: The Sufi Vision of Faith, Vision and Gnosis*, 1.

179 Al-Maḥalli and Al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr Al-Jalālayn al-Muyassar*, 600.

180 Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qurān al-ʿathīm.*, 2027.

181 Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jamiʿ li-ʾaḥkām al-Qurān*, 2006, 22:456.

182 Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ Al-Bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*, 7:562.

183 Al-Maḥalli and Al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr Al-Jalālayn al-Muyassar*, 600.

184 Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jamiʿ li-ʾaḥkām al-Qurān*, 2006, 22:457.

185 Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan Taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*, 7:366. Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jamiʿ Li-ʾAḥkām al-Qurān*, 2006, 21:217.

186 Al-Maḥalli and Al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr Al-Jalālayn al-Muyassar*, 600.

187 al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr Fakhr Al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, 30:120.

188 Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qurān al-ʿathīm.*, 1916.

189 Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*, 7:215.

190 Quoted in Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jamiʿ li-ʾaḥkām al-qurān*, 2006, 20:234. Translation in Nasr et al., *The Study Quran*, 1329.

191 It is to be noted that some of the commentators used Sufi terminology either synonymously or at other times distinctly. They are not necessarily consistent with each other, and assign their own meanings to them. For instance, what Al-Tustarī may mean by *mukāshafa* may differ with Al-Qushayrī and al-Ghazālī.

192 al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr Al-Tustarī*, 303.

193 To explain these terms, Al-Tustari states that "the essential characteristics of faith, which are the visual beholding of faith (*muʿāyanat al-īmān*), the unveiling of certainty (*mukāshafat al-yaqīn*), and the witnessing of the Lord (*mushāhadat al-rabb*)." Ibid., 77.

194 Al-Qushayrī, *Latāiʾf al-ishārāt*, 3:627.

195 In *Al-Risala Al-Qushayriyya*, he clarifies the meaning of these terms. Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī's Epistle on Sufism – Al-Risala Al Qushayriyya Fi ʾilm Al-Tasawwuf*, 124.

196 Al-Qushayri, *Latāiʾf al-ishārāt*, 3:627.

197 Al-Qushayri, *Al-Qushayrī's Epistle on Sufism – Al-Risala Al Qushayriyya Fi ʾilm Al-Tasawwuf*, 137.

198 Ibid.

199 Ibn ʿArabi includes the term *mushāhada*, and regards it as a synonym for *mukāshafa*. William Chittick says, "If *shuhūd* can be distinguished from *mushahada*, it may be in the sense that *shuhud* is used more generally, as a synonym for seeing and vision on any level of existence, whereas *mushāhada* is more often used as a synonym for unveiling." Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 227.

200 Ibn ʿArabi, *Futuḥāt Al-Makiyya*.

201 Cited and translated in Nasr et al., *The Study Quran*, 1556.

202 Bakar, "The Place of Doubt in Islamic Epistemology: Al-Ghazzali's Philosophical Experience."

203 Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 90–91.

204 Al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge: Book 1 of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 233 and 236.

205 Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿilm*, 266.

206 Al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge: Book 1 of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 266.

207 Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿilm*, 265. In *The Book of Patience and Thankfulness* (*Kitāb al-ṣabr waʾl-shukr*), Ghazālī interprets these grades differently. He states, "Hell can be perceived either by what is called the 'knowledge of certainty' (*ʿilm al-yaqīn*) or by what is called the 'vision of certainty' (*ʿayn al-yaqīn*). The vision of certainty is only in the Hereafter, while the knowledge of certainty may be in this world, but only for those who have fully realised the 'light of certainty' (*nūr al-yaqīn*). For this reason, God (Exalted is He!) said, *No, indeed, should you know through the knowledge of certainty you would certainly see Hell, that is, in this world; and, You shall surely see it with the eye of certainty*, that is, in the Hereafter." Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazali on Patience and Thankfulness*, 130.

208 Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿilm*, 141.

209 Zabidi, M. Murtada, *Ithaf al-sadat al-muttaqin bi-sharh asrar Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm Al-dīn,* 1:8, cited and translated in Ormsby, *Ghazali*, 109.

210 Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 79.

211 Jamiʿ al-Tirmidhi, 2687.

212 Al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*, 79.

Bibliography

Abdel Haleem, M.A.S. *The Quran*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Abrahamov, Binyamin. "Al-Ghazālī's Supreme Way to Know God." *Studia Islamica*, no. 77 (1993): 141–168.

Aristotle. *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Edited by Lesley Brown. Translated by David Ross. New ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-. *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995.

Avicenna. *The Metaphysics of the Healing: A Parallel English-Arabic Text Translated, Introduced, and Annotated*. Translated by Michael Marmura. Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2005.

Bakar, Osman. "The Place of Doubt in Islamic Epistemology: Al-Ghazzali's Philosophical Experience." In *The History and Philosophy of Islamic Science*. Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1999.

Burrell, David B. *Faith in Divine Unity and Trust in Divine Providence: The Revival of the Religious Sciences Book XXXV*. Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2001.

Campanini, Massimo. *Al-Ghazali and the Divine*. New York: Routledge, 2019.

Chittick, William C. *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.

Dallal, Ahmad. "Ghazali and the Perils of Interpretation." Edited by Richard M. Frank. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122, no. 4 (2002): 773–787.

Davidson, Herbert A. *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Ess, Josef van. "Quelques remarques sur le Munqidh Min Aḍ-Ḍalâl." In *Ghazâlî: La Raison et Le Miracle*, edited by Abdel-Magid Turki, 57–68. Paris: Éditions Maisonneuve et Larose, 1987.

Frank, Richard M. *Al-Ghazālī and the Ashʿarite School*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994.

Garden, Kenneth. *The First Islamic Reviver: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and His Revival of the Religious Sciences*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *Al-Ghazālī on Disciplining the Soul and on Breaking the Two Desires: Books XXII and XXIII of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*. Translated by Timothy Winter. Cambridge: Islamic Text Society, 1995.

———. *al-Maqṣad al-asna fī sharḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*. Damascus: Maṭbaʿa al-Ṣabāḥ, 1999.

———. *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*. Beirut: Dar al-Minhāj, 2019.

———. *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazālī*. Translated by Richard J. McCarthy. Boston: University of Beirut, 1980.

———. *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*. Vol. 3. Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1982.

———. *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*. Vol. 4. Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1982.

———. *Jawāhir al-Qurān*. Beirut: Dār iḥyāʾ al-ʿulūm, 1985.

———. *Kitāb al-ʿilm*. Damascus: Dār Saʿdi al-dīn, 2009.

———. *Letter to a Disciple (Ayyuhāʾl-walad): Bilingual English-Arabic Edition Translated with an Introduction & Notes*. Translated by Tobias Mayer. Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2005.

———. *Message from on High: A Translation of Risāla al-laduniyya*. Translated by Margaret Smith. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust (IBT), 2010.

———. *Mīzān al-ʿamal*. Edited by Sulayman Dunya. Cairo: Darul Maʿarif, 1964.

———. *Miʿyār al-ʿilm*. Edited by Sulayman Dunya. Cairo: Dar al-Maʿārif, 1961.

———. *On Patience and Thankfulness: Book XXXII of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*. Translated by H. T. Littlejohn. Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2010.

———. "Risāla al-laduniyya." In *Majmuʿāt al-rasāʾil al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, 239–253. Cairo: Al-maktaba al-tawfiqiyya, n.d.

———. *The Alchemy of Happiness*. Translated by Claud Field. New York: Routledge, 2015.

———. *The Book of Knowledge: A Translation with Notes of the Kitab al-ʿilm of al-Ghazālī's Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-Dīn*. Translated by Nabih Amin Faris. New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, 1970.

———. *The Book of Knowledge: Book 1 of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*. Translated by Kenneth Honerkamp. Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2015.

———. *The Marvels of the Heart: Translation of Kitāb sharḥ ʿajāʾib al-qalb, Book 21 of the Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*. Translated by Walter James Skellie. Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2010.

———. *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt al-anwār): A Parallel English-Arabic Text Translated, Introduced and Annotated*. Translated by David Buchman. Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1998.

———. *The Ninety Nine Beautiful Names of God: al-Maqṣad al-asna fī sharḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā Translated with Notes*. Translated by David B. Burrell and Nazih Daher. Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1995.

———. *The Principles of the Creed: Book 2 of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*. Translated by Khalid Williams. Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2016.

———. *The Scale of Action: Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's Mīzān al-ʿamal*. Translated by Yasien Mohamed, forthcoming.

Gianotti, Timothy J. "Beyond Both Law and Theology: An Introduction to al-Ghazālī's 'Science of the Way of the Afterlife' in Reviving Religious Knowledge (*Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*)." Edited by M. Afifi al-Akiti. *The Muslim World* 101, no. 4 (2011): 597–613.

Gilʿadi, Avner. "On the Origin of Two Key-Terms in al-Ghazālī *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*." *Arabica*, no. 36 (1989): 81–92.

Griffel, Frank. *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Heck, Paul. *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion*. London and New York: Routledge, 2014.

Heck, Paul L. "Chapter 14: Skepticism in Classical Islam: The Case of Ghazali." In *Skepticism: From Antiquity to the Present*, edited by Diego E. Machuca and Baron Reed, 196–208. Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.

Hourani, George F. "A Revised Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104, no. 2 (1984): 289–302.

Ibn Kathīr, Ismāʿīl ibn ʿUmar. *Tafsīr Al-Qurān al-ʿathīm*. Beirut: Dār al-Ibn Ḥazm, 2000.

Ibn ʿArabi, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *Futuḥāt Al-Makiyya*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutb al-ʿilmiyya, n.d.

Janssens, Jules. "Al-Ghazālī between Philosophy (*Falsafa*) and Sufism (*Taṣawwuf*): His Complex Attitude in the Marvels of the Heart (*ʿAjāʾib al-qalb*) of the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*." Edited by M. Afifi al-Akiti. *The Muslim World* 101, no. 4 (2011): 614–632.

Lumbard, Joseph. "Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī and the Art of Knowing." In *Light upon Light: Essays in Islamic Thought and History in Honor of Gerhard Bowering*, edited by Jamal J Elias and Bilal Orfali, 401–419. Leiden: Brill, 2019.

Al-Maḥalli, Jalāl al-Dīn, and Jalāl al-Dīn Al-Suyūṭī. *Tafsīr Al-Jalālayn al-Muyassar*. Maktaba Lubnān Nāshirūn, 2003.

Menn, Stephan. "The Discourse on the Method and the Tradition of Intellectual Autobiography." In *Hellenistic and Early Modern Philosophy*, edited by Jon Miller and Brad Inwood, 141–191. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Mohamed, Nabil Yasien. "The Role of the Qurʾānic Principle of *Wasaṭiyyah* in Guiding Islamic Movements." *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2018): 21–38.

Mohamed, Yasien. *The Path to Virtue: The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Raghib Al-Isfahani*. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 2006.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, Caner K. Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph Lumbard, and Mohammed Rustom, eds. *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 2015.

Ormsby, Eric. "The Taste of Truth: The Structure of Experience in Ghazālī's *Munqidh*." In *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*, edited by Wael Hallaq and Donald Little, 133–152. Leiden: Brill, 1991.

Ormsby, Eric L. *Ghazali: The Revival of Islam*. Oneworld, 2008.

Al-Qurṭubī, Abū ʿAbdullāh. *Al-Jamiʿ li-ʾaḥkām al-Qurān*. Vol. 22. Beirut: Mʿuasasat al-Risāla, 2006.

———. *Al-Jamiʿ Li-ʾAḥkām al-Qurān*. Vol. 21. Beirut: Mʿuasasat al-Risāla, 2006.

———. *Al-Jamiʿ Li-ʾAḥkām al-Qurān*. Vol. 20. Beirut: Mʿuasasat al-Risāla, 2006.

Al-Qushayrī, Abu 'l-Qasim. *Al-Qushayrī's Epistle on Sufism: Al-Risala Al Qushayriyya fi 'ilm Al-Tasawwuf*. Translated by Alexander D Knysh. Gernet, 2007.

Al-Qushayrī, Abū Qāsim. *Laṭāiʾf Al-Ishārāt*. 3rd ed. Vol. 3. Cairo: Al-Hayʾat al-Maṣriyat al-ʿĀma li al-Kitāb, 2006.

Rahman, Fazlur. *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy*. London and New York: Routledge, 1958.

Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-. *Tafsīr Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*. Vol. 30. Dār al-Fakr, 1981.

Shehadi, Fadlou. *Ghazālī's Unique Unknowable God*. Leiden: Brill, 1964.

Sirāj ad-Dīn, Abū Bakr. *The Book of Certainty: The Sufi Vision of Faith, Vision and Gnosis*. Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1992.

Al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr. *Jāmiʿ Al-Bayān ʿan Taʾwīl Āy al- Qurʾān*. Vol. 7. Beirut: Mʿuasasat al-Risāla, 1994.

Treiger, Alexander. "Al-Ghazālī's Classifications of the Sciences and Descriptions of the Highest Theoretical Science." *Dîvân: Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi* 16, no. 30 (2011): 1–32.

———. *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and its Avicennian Foundation*. London and New York: Routledge, 2012.

———. "Monism and Monotheism in al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-anwār*." *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2007): 1–27.

Tustarī, Sahl ibn ʿAbd Allah al-. *Tafsīr Al-Tustarī*. Edited by Yousef Meri. Translated by Annabel Keeler and Ali Keeler. Illustrated edition. Louisville and Amman, Jordan: Fons Vitae, 2011.

Epilogue

Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī is without a doubt one of the most influential thinkers in the Muslim world, if not the world. He integrated into his scholarship the wisdom of the ancients and of divergent camps within the Islamic tradition. His thought created a watershed moment in Sufism, philosophy (*falsafa*), and *kalām*. He is an enigmatic personality, and has invited much commentary on his oeuvre. This has led to tensions in understanding his commitment to either the Sufi tradition or philosophy. In this book, we have critically analysed the nature of doubt (*shakk*) and certainty (*yaqīn*) in Ghazālī's epistemology, while at the same time discussed his degree of commitment to philosophy and Sufism.

Ghazālī's brand of scepticism was far removed from the universal scepticism we witness in the Greek sceptical tradition. Ghazālī did not deny all systems of knowledge. Nor was he a religious sceptic who was critical of the fundamentals of the Islamic faith. Despite the stark similarities to Descartes and Hume, Ghazālī's scepticism took on a different texture. At the centre of his scepticism was the will to seek the truth and attain certainty. Through it, he scrutinised the sources of knowledge, challenged heterodox doctrines, and established the foundations of knowledge. Although he encouraged the activity of doubt, as a form of critical thinking, he sought to establish certainty in adherents of the Islamic faith through demonstrative reasoning.

Ghazālī is a middle-roader; he laboured to reconcile both reason and religious authority, not compromising the one for the other. In a sophisticated manner, he bridged the exoteric and esoteric traditions of Islam, embracing its traditional and spiritual dimensions. For Ghazālī, truth was not found at the behest of partisanship. He embraced universal and eternal truth, taking ownership of it despite its source. This is characteristic of his approach. He synthesised traditions with disparate voices. Also, he embraced foreign knowledge and appropriated it within the Islamic intellectual milieu. Although often done in a clandestine manner, Ghazālī *critically* integrated the Hellenic philosophical tradition within the science of the hereafter. He took what is universal and consistent with the Quranic world view, and applied it to his own purpose. Thus, he inaugurated the indigenisation of Platonic and Aristotelian thought within Islam.

Ghazālī's influence can be seen in later scholarship within the *kalām* discipline and Sufism. The emphasis he placed on demonstrative reasoning as a means to certainty became a salient feature in later *kalām*, influencing *mutakallimūn* such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d.1210), Qadhi ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d.1355), Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d.1390), and Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d.1413). Thus, *kalām* became identified with not just dialectical reasoning (*jadal*), but also demonstrative proof (*burhān*). Through giving a philosophical framing to spiritual experiences, Ghazālī's mark can also be seen in the theosophical Sufism of figures such as Suhrawardī (d. 1191) and Ibn ʿArabi (d. 1240). Ghazālī is an important transitional figure for understanding Islamic intellectual history. He did not give the death blow to philosophy in the Muslim world, as often assumed, but reinvigorated the *kalām* tradition and Sufism with philosophical elements. Islamic intellectual thought after Ghazālī did not decline but took a different course. Peripatetic philosophy (early *falsafa*) may have found less currency, while the more philosophical *kalām*, theosophical Sufism, and later *falsafa/ḥikma* thrived.

Ghazālī, not without reason, included the Ismāʿīlī Bāṭinites among the groups that may hold the truth. He realised that their doctrine had an appeal, and managed to attract many adherents. However, in Sufism he saw that the esoteric can be embraced, while still adhering to the exoteric precepts of the Sacred Law. Ghazālī's Sufism did not marginalise rationalism but rather integrated it. The Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) remained the only Infallible authority. The Sufi tradition complemented prophetic revelation and affirmed its truth as an inward reality. It provided experiential certitude and acted as a conduit to esoteric knowledge inaccessible to the rational mind.

Ghazālī reorganised the priorities of the Islamic intellectual tradition. He gave *kalām* and jurisprudence subordinate roles, serving the "science of the hereafter," or Sufism. He tamed philosophy, laying bare its limitations while he valorised Sufism as a superior means to certainty. However, he harmonised these two disciplines, synthesising the surety of the philosophical path with the greater luminosity, brilliance, and certainty of the mystical path. Ghazālī seamlessly integrated reason and spiritual observance within Islam without compromising the Quranic world view.

It was almost unanimous among scholars that Ghazālī was the reviver (*mujaddid*) of the religion in the sixth Islamic century. He continued to resonate among Muslims and impact later Islamic scholarship. Ghazālī's thought is relevant today, as it was yesterday. We live in a secular age, with a plurality of beliefs, where everything is contested and nothing escapes the scrutiny of doubt, yet our world is not void of faith. We can draw inspiration from Ghazālī to navigate our own world. For Ghazālī, there was no antagonism between faith and reason, nor an impasse between philosophy and Sufism. His curious mind and sceptical spirit "poked into every dark recess […] made an assault on every problem […] plunged into every abyss […] [and] scrutinised the creed of every sect,"[1] and yet he held firm onto the rope of faith and ventured to consistently seek higher levels of certainty.

Note

1 Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Faith and Practice of al-Ghazálí': A Translation of the "Deliverance from Error" and "The Beginning of Guidance,"* trans. W. Montgomery Watt (Oxford: One World, 1953), 18.

Bibliography

Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *Faith and Practice of al-Ghazálí': A Translation of the "Deliverance from Error" and "The Beginning of Guidance."* Translated by W. Montgomery Watt. Oxford: One World, 1953.

Index

Note: Endnotes are indicated by the page number followed by 'n' and the endnote number e.g., 20n1 refers to endnote 1 on page 20. Page numbers in *italic* refer to Tables.